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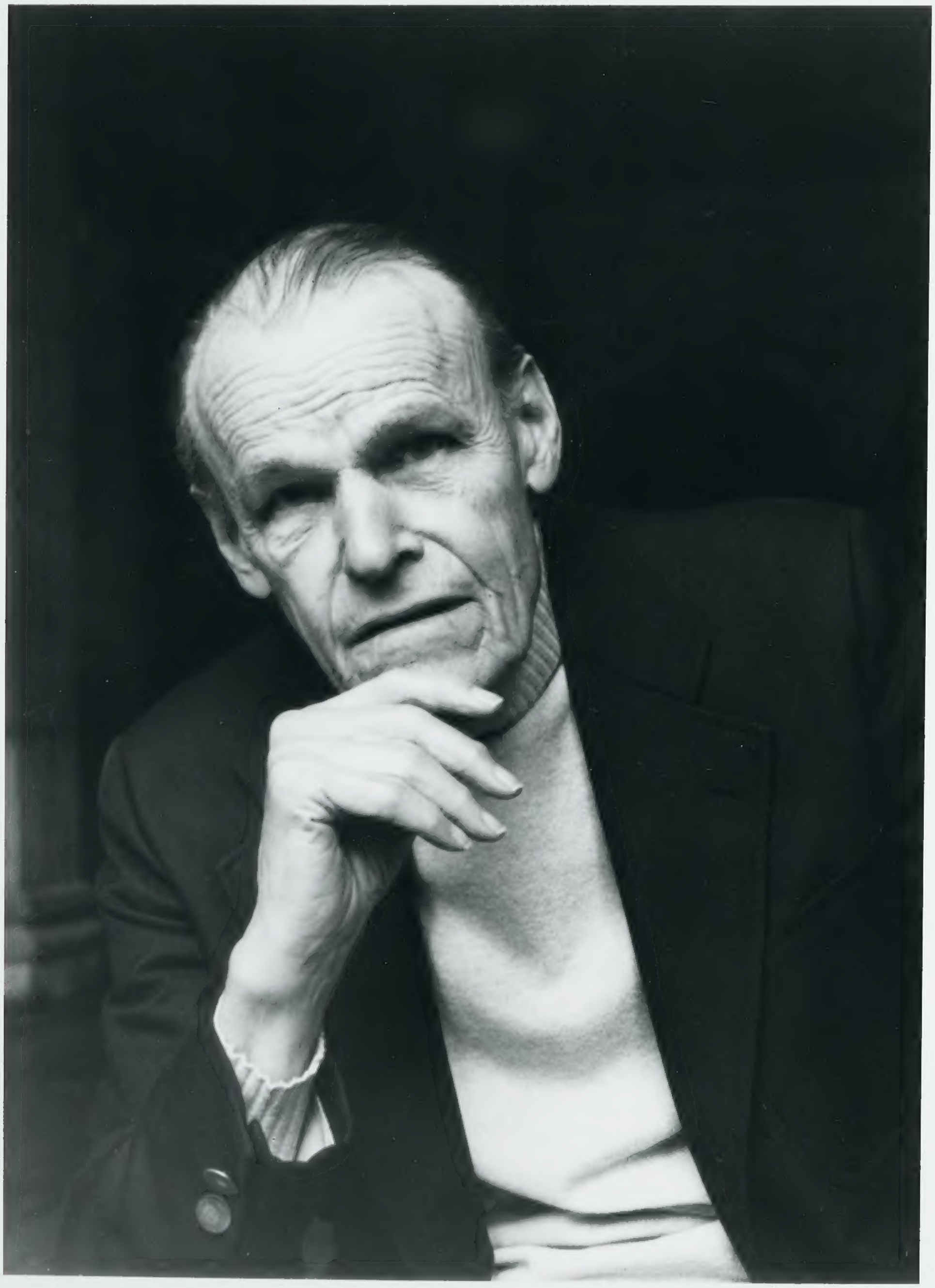

ART HISTORIAN

George A. Kubler

Interviewed by Richard Cándida Smith and Thomas F. Reese

VOLUME II

Art History Oral Documentation Project

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TAPE NUMBER: IX, SIDE ONE

MARCH 30, 1991

REESE: I just wanted to go back over one thing we mentioned yesterday. You were in Spain and Portugal first in '52, '53, and then in '56 and '57. On the second trip you said you spent a lot of time in Portugal. I wondered if you might talk about your first introduction to Portuguese studies and the people who were very important for you in that route.

KUBLER: Yes. The name of Carlos de Azevedo has always been my passport in Portugal. He was the Portuguese secretary for the Fulbright program, and my Fulbright grants to Portugal were administered by Carlos Azevedo. He was always my firm support in getting access to buildings and to people who knew about them. Always useful, always knowledgeable, and always helpful. So Carlos Azevedo is the principal. Then there was an elder businessman, Carlos Goetz. Goetz was in the used airplane business. He's also a collector of art and knew a good deal about Portuguese art. And he was of help. So those were my supporters and aids in Portugal.

REESE: What was your center of operation in Portugal?

KUBLER: Well, we lived in Lisbon and then cruised out to the country in the usual pattern, staying in the

countryside. With a library, keeping records and taking pictures, and so on.

REESE: Was there a pension there that you--?

KUBLER: Yes. There was a marvelous place called York House. It's still going. The York House was in a sixteenth-century conventual building. It had been taken over by a French woman, who turned it into a very attractive hotel with her son, who was an interior decorator in Lisbon. That was a very pleasant headquarters, and we graduated to better and better rooms in this beautiful building which had survived the earthquake of 1750. Lisbon is like a hand--mountainous ridges and valleys in between. The earthquake demolished the valleys but left the ridges alone. This convent is on the top of a ridge, and it's the sixteenth-century building, almost intact, but turned into very inviting monastic cells. We graduated to the refectory, which was a long, long room with a tray ceiling and at the end a bathroom in a narrow corridor. [laughter] A bathroom twenty feet long and barely wide enough for the servant.

REESE: Did you find Portugal to be a very, very different setting than Spain?

KUBLER: Totally. Spain is almost waterless, but its rivers, its western rivers, all make Portugal green. Portugal is instantly green when you come into it. The

frontiers correspond to the coastal waters coming from Spain.

REESE: But in the analysis of the architecture itself, did you find that there were very different kinds of qualities and rhythms and problematic concerns?

KUBLER: Very different. Very different, and as in the language, the art has different sources. The Portuguese are more Germanic and they're more Northern Europe in the original reconquest from the Moors. Whereas Spain was reconquered with a French stamp, and that French stamp is part of the lightness of the Spanish expression. The Portuguese are more like Burgundians, rather heavy and rather Germanic, and the language is also heavy and not graceful.

SMITH: In terms of the traveling that you did, did this affect or lead to foreign students coming to Yale [University] in the art history program?

KUBLER: Yes, it did. We did have visitors, but not in many numbers. Portuguese find it difficult to study abroad.

SMITH: What about Spaniards or people from Peru, Mexico, etc.?

KUBLER: Occasional visitors. No steady flow.

SMITH: Were you involved in setting up study abroad programs for Yale students?

KUBLER: No. Only in advising our graduate students' dissertations.

REESE: I know that in the period following 1964, '65, when there was this void within the department left by the departure of [William] McDonald, that a number of Europeans did this. And before that there had been Europeans like Egbert Haverkamp-Begemann who had joined the Yale faculty. And Yves Bottineau, Jacinto Quirarte--a number of visitors came. Was that seen as something new within the department? To bring more Europeans and visitors from outside?

KUBLER: Well, that was always a part of the policy of the department, and it was made possible by the French government mainly, through [André] Chastel in Paris. The French government created a Focillon fellowship, so that many French people came as one-year scholars and residing, doing research or teaching. [Jean] Bony was an example, and there were dozens of them. So that was the main contact with European students, the Focillon fellowship, which is still active. We still have a Focillon fellow every year.

REESE: When you went on leave to write, was your position often filled by people in the field? Did you have a strong voice in who might take your classes?

KUBLER: Once or twice that was possible for the

department, and I had a candidate and it worked out very well.

SMITH: This is related, since you brought up Chastel. It was something I had been meaning actually to ask in one way or another everyone we're interviewing in this series. In France, art history has to some degree a state role. It's very much tied into defining national identity, and there's a great deal of government money for it. Has there been a role for art history to play in the United States in terms of helping to define American identification with the rest of the world, or has it--? How would you characterize during the postwar period the relationship of art historians and art history as a discipline to government programs?

KUBLER: Well, the relationship with the French government followed us into France. It was a study exchange. It was not a one-way exchange. We sent people to France.

SMITH: I was thinking within the United States, were art historians being asked by various levels of the government to advise on--?

KUBLER: This government?

SMITH: The American government. To advise on questions--

KUBLER: It's hard to say. It's very irregular, shifting with administrations and having strong support in one administration and then no support in another. So it's on

and off as a domestic supply of money.

SMITH: Did the USIA [United States Information Agency] ever ask you to go abroad and lecture?

KUBLER: No.

REESE: Although they indirectly administered the Fulbright program. And you were several times--

KUBLER: Yes, I was. So I suppose that would be indirectly the connection.

SMITH: Where you ever asked to give advice on pre-Columbian art or culture to American government officials?

KUBLER: Yes. I remember there was a search on for people to advise the customs service on the legislation about the import of antiquities. What was genuine, what was fake, what the value was. I talked to an official from the customs office and nothing ever came of it. But I know that some people, for example Michael Coe, the anthropologist here, took a very serious part in this service, and I've heard him lecture on his experiences. It was a very amusing lecture--being a customs official, really.

SMITH: Many governments in the Third World have become more restrictive about what they will allow to be exported. How has that affected your work as a scholar or the work of your students?

KUBLER: None at all, because it is not in any way

directed toward collecting, my work. It's very often available in museums, and there are large collections now in almost every major museum. It's not necessary to follow what the dealers have. There's never any close tie with the dealers necessary, excepting for students who want to be dealers. Sometimes we have a student work as a dealer.

SMITH: How important was it for you for the students to actually handle the objects?

KUBLER: Well, we did. We had the collection of Fred and Florence Olsen. They were people who were industrialists in Michigan and who settled in Connecticut. While they were in Connecticut, they became deeply interested in American antiquity and formed a large collection in their house at the shore and eventually gave that collection to Yale. So the Olsen collection is a collection that the students had to work with. We worked with it in a storeroom and on the display floors steadily year after year. Eventually the catalog was written by students.

REESE: There was another great early collection in which you have a good bit of knowledge, and that, of course, is the Bliss collection at--

KUBLER: At Dumbarton Oaks, yes.

REESE: I wonder if you could say something about the

importance of the Bliss collection and that study center for pre-Columbian art here in the--

KUBLER: It didn't go on public display until the Blisses [Robert Woods and Mildred Barnes Bliss] put it on display in the National Gallery [of Art]. And in the National Gallery it was shown in the basement and not very well. But eventually the Blisses took it out of the National Gallery and built a little steel casket for that collection, which is a charming part of the Dumbarton Oaks buildings complex. And that's where it's still displayed. It's a very static collection--there are only occasionally rare additions to it. Which is true also with the Byzantine collection. They are static collections. They are not in growth.

REESE: When do you first remember visiting the collection, and what kind of memory do you have of the Blisses?

KUBLER: The Blisses I never knew, excepting visits to Dumbarton Oaks when they still lived there, when they still lived in Washington. They were charming people. Their house is a study center, which the Dumbarton Oaks has become, with three divisions: American antiquities, the Byzantine collection, and then the third collection is a remarkable library of landscape architecture. The grounds of Dumbarton Oaks are a museum of landscape art. So these three research institutes have gathered together

at the Dumbarton Oaks, and this is the work of the Blisses. The landscape collection was her work and the archaeological collection was his work. And the Byzantine collection was both of them. He was a diplomat.

REESE: I was thinking of the larger question of the history of pre-Columbian studies in this country, of the institutions that have come along and energized the field and made possible important advances. Like Dumbarton Oaks, which supplies scholarship and a museum setting.

KUBLER: And conferences and publications. Their publication list is very impressive.

REESE: Are there others that you felt a really welcoming presence in helping stimulate something that in the early forties, as we talked about the other day, was practically nonexistent?

KUBLER: That's right. There were collections, but there was very little money attached to them. The Blisses made possible a lot of fellowships, and the libraries were constantly being improved and available. So that the fellowship list of Dumbarton Oaks really mirrors the whole profession of anthropologists and humanists interested in ancient America.

SMITH: How much fieldwork did you do for the ancient America book [The Art and Architecture of Ancient America: The Mexican, Maya, and Andean Peoples (1962)]?

KUBLER: I wrote it mostly in the library. I have never been a field archaeologist, excepting at Cuzco. At Cuzco, when I was there for the earthquake with UNESCO [United Nations Educational, Scientific, and Cultural Organization], I had a budget in which quite a residue remained at the end of the work I was assigned to do. I got permission to spend that on an excavation at Santo Domingo. Santo Domingo has that curved Inca wall on which had been an Inca royal structure, and the Dominicans had built on top of it and put their sanitary in what had been the Inca palace. So we excavated that area and disengaged the curving wall of Inca masonry from the rest of the basement of the church. That was later published in the detail that it should have been, but the report to UNESCO [Cuzco: Reconstruction of the Town and Restoration of Its Monuments (1948)] mentions this excavation. I had a staff to work with.

SMITH: You had mentioned yesterday that you saw about 20 percent of the sites that you discuss in the first Pelican book [Art and Architecture in Spain and Portugal and Their American Dominions, 1500 to 1800 (1959)].

KUBLER: I've never checked that figure. I think to see them all would have taken five times as long. [laughter] I measure that way.

SMITH: In terms of the ancient America book, what would

be the equivalent? What would be the percentage of the actual sites?

KUBLER: Maybe 20 percent would be high. Because I know Peru well and I know something about Ecuador and something about Bolivia. But the rest of South America-- Well, I know a little bit about Venezuela and Colombia. But I don't know Argentina, I don't know Chile, I don't know Brazil. So I was writing about things I hadn't seen.

SMITH: Before we get into the two books, I had wanted to ask you if during this period of time there was a shift in the nature of the students who were coming into the program. What kind of changes were taking place in the nature of the students, and what kinds of developments were taking place in terms of the topics that they were choosing to focus on?

KUBLER: I would say that we were seeing more students from anthropology and more students from Latin American studies, and they came to courses in some numbers. That was a regular part of the enrollment in your [Reese's] time, I think.

SMITH: In terms of your graduate students that you worked with, as your books started coming out, would there be people coming--? Say after the book on Spanish and Portuguese architecture comes out, would there be more students coming to you whose interest was Iberian

architecture?

KUBLER: I'd say that the students who came to Yale for Hispanic studies, whether European or American, came from other parts of the university to our courses. It was rare that anyone enrolled in the history of art from outside for that sole purpose. There were perhaps over the years five or six students who came to do a dissertation or a thesis.

SMITH: So the students you worked with-- If I'm understanding you right, you're saying they came to Yale for the history of art program and then once there decided to work with you on a topic.

KUBLER: That sometimes happened, and sometimes they came to work with us directly. Sometimes they shifted or did part of their dissertation in the history of art but the rest in anthropology or in Latin American studies.

SMITH: Well, in terms of the dissertations that you supervised, I'm wondering if you look back now, if you see that there were certain waves of interest, or fashions even, of topics during the forty years that you were teaching.

KUBLER: There weren't so many. There weren't so many dissertations that one could begin to block them out into groups. [laughter] They came singly. [to Reese] Wouldn't you say?

REESE: I think clearly in the period following the appearance of the ancient American book, after '65, you have the largest number of students coming to work on pre-Columbian.

KUBLER: Yes.

REESE: Whereas before, Donald Robertson, Peg [Margaret] Collier, John Hoag had worked more on the colonial and Spanish art.

KUBLER: That's right, yes. The students to Yale for those studies were to anthropology or to the history department, and sometimes to the language department. Sometimes we got a spillover from languages, from literature.

REESE: Although there were still a number of students in the late sixties and seventies--myself included, Cathy [Catherine] Wilkinson, Molly Volk, Barbara Anderson--who were studying Mexican and Spanish materials.

KUBLER: They were all wholeheartedly in Latin American or Hispanic studies, yes. Yes, they were the principal students who stayed with it.

REESE: But after that, Arthur [G.] Miller, who was a Harvard [University] student but studied with you a great deal. From that point on, though, they were a very, very strong, dominant, I think, group of pre-Columbianists. And Flora [S.] Clancy and Mary Miller. Have you had any

students since the seventies who worked on Spain or colonial?

KUBLER: Yes. Rodríguez-- What was his full name?

REESE: Camilloni. No. Humberto.

KUBLER: Humberto Rodríguez Camilloni, yes, yes. He has stayed in the colonial field and in the pre-Columbian studies very solidly. He's at the University of Virginia at Blacksburg. There he has the chairmanship of the department of architecture. He took a degree both in architecture and in the history of art. He is the chairman of the architectural program at the University of Virginia. There's another Rodríguez who died recently-- Rodríguez Roque. Did you know him?

REESE: I didn't know him.

KUBLER: Well, he ended up on the Metropolitan Museum [of Art] staff as a Hispanist.

REESE: Do you want to turn now to the ancient America book?

SMITH: Perhaps The Shape of Time: [Remarks on the History of Things (1962)]. That was written and published first, correct?

REESE: No, I think--

SMITH: The other way around? What was published first?

KUBLER: It was published '59, '60.

SMITH: You had been working on Art of Ancient America for almost ten years at that point.

KUBLER: I was doing both books at the same time. The Pelican book was near completion, and I used this illness for working out The Shape of Time.

SMITH: Let's do Ancient America first. I noticed you commented that you used Shape of Time to criticize art history from an anthropological point of view and Art of Ancient America to criticize anthropology from an art historical point of view. Perhaps you could review what you felt the deficiency of the anthropological/ archaeological view of Native American societies and cultures was.

KUBLER: Grosso modo, lack of interest in the aesthetic component of any culture or all culture. [laughter]

REESE: I was going to review a little bit the history of the writing of Ancient America. In the introduction you noted that you had written an initial draft in 1951 and then that in 1957 after completing the Ars Hispaniae [Arquitectura de los siglos XVII y XVIII] you returned to write the Ancient America in a new format. Finally, you submitted that, I believe, in May of '59--the Pelican volume on ancient America. I'm wondering a little bit about what you recall about the decisions that motivated your complete reframing of a text you had written earlier in that period following '57.

KUBLER: That first draft was much more anthropological

than the second. I saw that I had been guided by the requirements of my work for Handbook of South American Indians. I decided it wasn't going to be of the immediacy to the subject that was needed in the history of art, but discarded that structure and framed a new one for the second version.

REESE: I mean, were you feeling tensions emerging during the mid-fifties between the archaeologists/anthropologists, and the art historians? I know that there was a conference with [Tatiana] Proskouriakoff and many others present, about '55, in which you participated. One could begin to feel certain, for instance--

KUBLER: The anthropologists really were not in any conscious way impeding the history of art, nor were they offering any employment to historians of art on archaeological excavations. The presence of Proskouriakoff was an exceptional thing. She was an architect and an artist of consequence, and she thought very much as an art historian does. At the same time she had central roles in important excavations, so she is an accredited archaeologist of lots of excavations that she had participated in. Her opinion was sought and highly regarded. She was always a critic of anthropological methods. She never praised any archaeologist on any of the excavations she took part in; she was always critical

of their method. So there was an affinity with her among art historians.

REESE: I'm thinking of what you discussed yesterday when in '42, '43, and '44 you were pleading so strongly for the interdisciplinary collaboration between anthropologists, and now we find by 1955 a certain territoriality that seems to be arising. You think it was exclusively on the part of the anthropologists? Or was there equal guilt, perhaps, on the side of those few art historians who were collecting, and museums?

KUBLER: Well, we formed a team of art historians at one point. This team of about five or six was centered on the work of the University Museum at the University of Pennsylvania in Maya studies, and several students and I blocked out tasks for art historians in the excavation programs of University Museum of Pennsylvania. Now, there were five or six of us involved and doing separate tasks, and these were never recognized. These papers were never recognized according to the agreement that we had with the University Museum when it came to publication. The University Museum concluded with its plan of publication for Tikal but discarded the work that Arthur Miller and others had done of Tikal, including the paper I wrote on the glyphs of Tikal. They've always refused to permit the use of their photographs, on which we base our work, for

our publications if we were to publish outside the University Museum. Nor would University Museum accept them in its publication program, so that none of these five or six papers that emerged were published by University Museum. I think variations on the papers may have appeared, but the papers, as intended, were not published by University Museum. That was a great disappointment.

REESE: I know you've written a good bit about anthropology or art history and have made your points, I think, strongly there. What I wonder, though, is if you've thought at all about not merely the kind of theoretical argument advanced by scientific anthropology versus humanistic art history, but what kind of underlying conditions within the university, within the scholarship competition for students-- What other things might have caused this increasing kind of break in the fifties and sixties, from these early days where you and Wendell Bennett were a team to work together on this material?

KUBLER: Well, at the University Museum and at the University of Pennsylvania the key figure in the Tikal project was William Coe, the brother of Michael. William Coe and Michael Coe were not friendly. William Coe and Michael Coe were both anthropologists, both Mayanists, both in the same game. At one point there was an episode

in which one of the brothers abandoned the other in a very dangerous situation--the collapse of the tunnel. I don't know which of the brothers it was. In any case, the Tikal project was under William Coe's direction. And William Coe is the one who has resisted after accepting the offer of our group to write these papers on Tikal. He's the one who refused use of the photographs for any publication we might make separately from University Museum. None of the commitments to publish our papers as they were submitted were ever honored. So we were left high and dry.

SMITH: You'd mentioned that it was difficult for art historians to get on archaeological teams. What about the availability of research funds for an art historian, either individually or as a group, to go to one of the sites and do original research independent of the archaeologist?

KUBLER: Well, Jeff Kowalski has continued as an art historian. He has been very successful on his own in getting grants for ambitious excavations at Uxmal, for example. So there's an art historian who has been able to break through the anthropological monopoly of grants on his own.

SMITH: Is that an unusual case?

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: When did that take place, do you know?

KUBLER: Well, Kowalski was a dissertation candidate in the seventies, wasn't it? Yes.

SMITH: I wonder if this suggests that an underlying problem might be a shortage, that the anthropologists feel that there are not enough funds to do what they need to do and therefore they don't want art historians mucking about.

KUBLER: That's right. That's right. It's a very closed circuit of funding, and an art historian has to do it on his own.

SMITH: Well, there are art history funding sources, which I presume typically are directed to be able to send somebody to Prado or to the [American] Academy at Rome, etc. How do those funding sources feel about--?

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SMITH: Just repeat what you were saying about the attitude of traditional art history funding sources towards Latin American or ancient American research projects.

KUBLER: I don't think there's any problem there. But when art historians apply to anthropological institutions or bodies, anthropologists come first.

SMITH: So when an art historian whose interest is ancient America goes to a traditional art history source, they are in as good a position to get money as someone who wants to go to Munich to do research there?

KUBLER: On the whole, yes. And Kowalski has been able to work with one or another, sometimes with anthropological resources, sometimes with humanistic ones, but he manages to keep going on his own.

SMITH: Is there a problem in that the art history funding sources give smaller grants, typically?

KUBLER: Very likely. I think there's more for anthropology.

REESE: I'm still interested in trying to pursue this question of the moment at which the first signs of a rupture within even the ambience of Yale, the ambience in

which you moved-- For example, Betsy [Elizabeth] Smith and [Floyd G.] Lounsbury were very closely cooperative together during the period in which she completed her dissertation on glyphs. I'm wondering how you would describe the early relationships with Michael Coe and others teaching the same material you were teaching within anthropology, and what kind of memories you have of the evolving nature of crossover students who had come from one program to another.

KUBLER: Well, Michael Coe thinks of me as uncooperative, which is probably correct. I'm uncooperative with anthropologists who resist the programs of art historians applying to anthropology. Michael Coe and I were teaching the same sort of thing in the general courses. I never found a reason to work with Michael Coe because of his-- He came to Yale in the fifties, and it was never possible for me to work with him and I never tried. [laughter] It's probably my fault.

SMITH: There we have what could be a question of personal incompatibility.

KUBLER: I think it's an incompatibility.

SMITH: But there also seems to be a broader issue of how art historians and anthropologists relate to each other, which goes beyond personalities.

KUBLER: I always got along easily with anthropologists

before Coe's time. [laughter] Wendell Bennett, Lounsbury-- Lounsbury and I have worked together;. Bennett and I have worked together. But it would be impossible to work with Coe because Coe wouldn't want to work with me.

REESE: Another figure, though, who in many ways seems to be on both sides in this equation, would be Gordon Willey, whom you've had a long friendship with yet disagreed with.

KUBLER: We were good friends, and we worked together on different projects and especially at Dumbarton Oaks. So the anthropological inclusion at Dumbarton Oaks is very compatible. I'm very compatible with them, but Coe is always the one resisting.

SMITH: How much does this have to do with a supposed conflict between a humanistic approach and a social science approach?

KUBLER: I can't say. I've never really had a chance to talk with Coe about this.

REESE: Well, I'm torn between two things that were discussed right now. One would be your important 1958 article on space in Maya courtyards ["The Design of Space in Maya Architecture"], which was very clearly an application of methods that came out of the history of art to the analysis of space. The other is to jump more directly into the Ancient America as a cleavage point in

the professional relations between art historians and archaeologists, based on the fact that you proposed radically different explanations in a major textbook which any young historian of anthropology or of the art of ancient America--

SMITH: Why don't we discuss the article a little bit.

KUBLER: The article on space?

SMITH: On space, right. The sense that you felt art history is absolutely essential to expand understanding of ancient American society.

KUBLER: Well, that's the gist of this book [Esthetic Recognition of Ancient Amerindian Art (1991)], mainly. The necessity for aesthetic recognition in cultural problems, which I think is on the whole ignored by anthropology, social anthropology. They have no place for it, and they don't want to be burdened with it. So from my end it's a losing game. [laughter]

SMITH: I know you've done this at various points in various essays, but if you could sort of succinctly give us your working definitions of the difference between a humanistic approach and a social science approach.

KUBLER: The social science and sociological analysis really has no room for aesthetic problems. There is no room.

SMITH: Is that because everything has to be quantifiable?

KUBLER: It must be quantifiable, and it has to be explained in ways that do not make it necessary in the traditional practice of sociology to apply to aesthetics. Aesthetics is unnecessary.

SMITH: You've said at some points that the art object is, well, useless in a sense, or ineffable.

KUBLER: Well, my formulation is more inclusive of everything. All objects are both tools and works of art. A reciprocal relationship--some are tools, some are works of art. But no tool is without some aesthetic meaning. No work of art is without some useful aspect. So it's a graded series both ways, and the aesthetic component is never absent from the tool--all tools are residually works of art--and vice versa.

SMITH: That aesthetic part includes an ineffable aspect. I think you used the word ineffable in one of your later essays. What I'm getting at is, would you agree that the aesthetic object has a degree of irrationality built into it?

KUBLER: It's part of the emotional side of life. This I think has really been left out of the social science program. From our point of view.

SMITH: If you could give your working definition of a humanistic viewpoint-- Which I recall [Giovanni] Previtali said you had escaped from, but you denied.

KUBLER: Well, my present point of view is in the book.

SMITH: Your most recent book [Esthetic Recognition of Ancient Amerindian Art].

REESE: In An Anthropologist Looks at History, [Alfred] Kroeber said, "Histories of art accordingly promise to be of increasing importance in the comparative history of civilizations. Art expresses values. It deals with them perhaps more directly than any other cultural activity, and in every civilization there resides a value system." And he continues with this. Do you feel that many of the anthropologists working in the fifties and sixties were, in fact, ignoring those values?

KUBLER: I think so. Recent theoretical developments in anthropology and anthropological archaeology are excessively scientific and continuing to ignore the aesthetic component of their subjects of study.

SMITH: This may be an unfair question, but I'm wondering-- In the last twenty years there's been somewhat of a revision of the understanding of Maya societies and how they were organized. Does that revision correspond to what you would know from the art historical record?

KUBLER: Well, Mary Miller, my colleague, was one of the authors of the book called Blood of Kings. This recent revision of the understanding of Maya society depends very much on the restudy of the representation of rites of

blood sacrifice in Maya art. The other division of the advance in understanding Maya inscriptions and arts is in respect to the theory of government and the presence of these kingships. So the Blood of Kings states both these directions of the new quotation marks, "interpretation of Maya civilization." I think they were all present there long before they were codified, as they have been now, but what lies beyond the Blood of Kings remains to be seen. I don't think the Blood of Kings is a final word, a final caption for the whole of Maya civilization.

REESE: To return briefly to the article on space and Maya architecture, it seems to me that such a formulation must have depended, you know, very largely on ideas in the history of art that had grown out of works like Bruno Zevi's and Siegfried Giedion's and others that would then apply to the New World. Can you recall something about the kind of genesis of that article and how early you began thinking about it? Was it something explored first in classes?

KUBLER: I think so. It came out of teaching and the consideration of Maya design of space.

REESE: Did you think when you presented that paper for the first time that it would have any shock value for anthropologists? Did you assume that they simply would be grateful to have a new insight?

KUBLER: Well, I said it at a congress. I think it was a congress of Americanists. It's a line of investigation that could be picked up and carried farther. I've noticed in the work of architects who were engaged in Maya archaeology an awareness of this problem which is independent of my paper on the subject. But I don't see big institutional investigations of Mayan architecture getting involved in this problem, again. It's there, but no one is working on it.

SMITH: Have other ancient American architectures been subjected to the kind of architectural analysis that you were developing in that article? For instance, Teotihuacán.

KUBLER: I don't see field archaeologists taking serious notice of this possibility. They do their measurements and perform their calculations, and they go ahead with their reconstructions more or less indifferent to the problem of space--of the space they're handling or mutilating or destroying. [laughter]

SMITH: Are you suggesting that you can't actually measure or describe a building without knowing its inherent meanings for the people who created it?

KUBLER: Well, I would like to know what Mayas thought about their spatial designs, and the only way to begin is to describe them--describe them more adequately than the

anthropological archaeologist would want to do. I think this is part of Proskouriakoff's dissatisfaction with archaeology and archaeologists of anthropological training.

REESE: There's another figure who we have not spoken of at all, Miguel Covarrubias. Were you friends?

KUBLER: We knew him in Oaxaca. He was on business in Oaxaca during our stay there once while I was working on the architectural book. Miguel Covarrubias was a commercial artist and a very successful one and a society artist. At the time of his death he was working on a trilogy, one on ancient Mexico. During the writing of his trilogy he became an ardent diffusionist--about '59. And the books that he brought out were filled with diffusionist arguments lifted from the proposals of people defending that position. Before he died he had become identified with diffusionism, which was being abandoned by anthropologists. We were talking about this. [laughter]

REESE: I'm thinking about those individuals--Proskouriakoff trained as an artist, [Jean] Charlot as an illustrator, Covarrubias as an artist, and I'm sure there were others. Did you feel that they brought another dimension, really, to the writing about--?

KUBLER: Charlot, I think he did, perhaps more temperately than Covarrubias in his diffusionist frame of mind.

REESE: Earlier, I had said that I thought that it might be important to talk about the impact of Ancient America on the field.

KUBLER: On the field of?

REESE: On the field of anthropology, but also art history. Clearly, there were issues about method and what one looked at, selection of objects. But there was also the very important contested zone about calendar, about correlations. I wonder if you could bring us back over to difficulties of trying to, in fact, work out the final jigsaw puzzle in which all of these various sequences fell into place.

KUBLER: Well, calendar studies are subject to a great variety in the quality of the sixteenth-century records. There are reliable sixteenth-century records and there are unreliable sixteenth-century records. Sorting these out is still going on, but the reliable ones are documents that are widely scattered and have been studied intensely in the nineteenth century with commentaries that are still the only commentaries that we have. So the question is to restudy the manuscripts themselves and retest the conclusions of the original editors such as Eduard Seler and others.

REESE: I'm afraid I probably led you askew because I used the word calendar rather than chronology, and I was really

thinking of the problem of the chronologies and the early disputes about the GMT.

KUBLER: Yes. They all go together--the correlation with the Christian calendar. There are still great problems to be solved in those directions. For example, Codex Borbonicus 21, 22-- Those two panels offer not only description of the solar year and the ceremonial year, they also are historical calendars. It's a calendar in which the basic elements indicate a cycle of 20,176 years, of which we're still in the first quarter. And this is what that manuscript is about.

REESE: I'm trying to get this in another way, perhaps, because it's such a sprawling question. You described in writing the Ars Hispaniae volume that you would write different pieces of it and out of those that one could fit into it write a larger whole. In the ancient America book I've assumed that one could proceed in the same way, except without dates that were absolutely fixed. At some point the little parenthesis following the monument demanded to be filled in with some kind of an absolute date. I'm trying to reconstruct a little bit the process of writing the book and of then facing the problem of leaving the whole thing together within a chronology and what you recall about your thought process during that. Not your final decision one way or the other, but just a

way in which you--

KUBLER: Oh, I think the problem of correlating the chronologies is on the whole in good order, and we're very close to being able to leave the periods as indicated in a text for our calendar by centuries. So that we can use the sequence of centuries--B.C., A.D.-- with relative security in Mesoamerica and in the Andean archaeology. Carbon 14 and other dates are multiplying constantly, and there are more and more indications that we can assign any object to a century in our sequence of centuries, which is very different from having to deal with the classic, the preclassic, the postclassic.

REESE: The book for you was clearly a piece of original scholarship, not merely a recapitulation of accepted wisdom, as some textbooks tend to imply. Who was your audience for the Ancient America?

KUBLER: I was thinking of the general reader. The general reader of the [Nikolaus] Pevsner history of art. And that might include an anthropologist. [laughter] It might include an art historian. I hoped to satisfy both.

REESE: Not necessarily students, though, but an educated adult public?

KUBLER: Yes. Which all students are in the process of becoming. [laughter]

SMITH: Yesterday, when we talked about the craft of

writing, there's something we didn't talk about, which is the question of how you develop an approach to describing an object. I think it's particularly important in this work. Any description in a Euroamerican cultural language begins to impose certain values and interpretations on something that developed on a very different framework. How would you approach this question? How do you go about describing your objects in words?

KUBLER: Well, an architectural assemblage has to be described in space. A painted assemblage has to be described in the illusion of space--some illusion of space. A jewel has to be described in terms of the order in which jewels exist, and so on. Each kind of artwork has those descriptive requirements that differ according to the artwork. So that the wording requires as penetrating a study of the organization of that particular kind of object as possible. Very often there isn't an adequate way of describing a textile or a jewel or a monumental sculpture excepting in its own terms. There's no generic way. Perhaps every work of art needs to be described in some measure to capture its singleness rather than its membership in a group, or both at the same time. And we're going to go on and on with the things that are desirable in describing works of art, but always changing with what the work of art is under consideration.

SMITH: How important is it for you to include in some degree your own emotional reaction to the piece?

KUBLER: That's a separate task, and it should include the history of opinion--according to the space that's available. And you rarely have much space. In a general text like Pelican, there's difficulty going into the history of the writing on a object or a place.

REESE: Do you remember at all the process of actually writing the final draft for Ancient America and the precise body of time you did it? Or was it, again, done with pieces elaborated over a very long period of time?

KUBLER: I think the latter, yes. It was done in pieces and over a long time and rejecting drafts and replacing. I don't know if one has an impression of patchwork from using the book, but I imagine that book has been used for general information--general information rather than for descriptions of specific works. Classes of objects are the main subject.

SMITH: Classes of objects, and yet the objects must be described in their uniqueness.

KUBLER: And yet they're unique. As works of art they're unique.

SMITH: What about the selection of the objects that you decided to focus on? The buildings, etc. To some degree that choice, I guess, is conventional. I mean, there's an

opinion that's formed, but to what degree did you feel that you had to include or exclude things that were outside the convention?

KUBLER: Well, there's the chronological armature. That has to be filled, and it must be filled adequately for each area. The work of selection is what is most important for the reader to know and how much to give the reader. And of course you're limited by what is known, [laughter] and it's changing as you're writing.

REESE: It brings up, of course, the question of the quality.

KUBLER: Yes. Importance of quality. Sometimes it's important for understanding other things.

REESE: So in that way it's really a symbol, or at least a window into other problems.

KUBLER: Yes. Some objects lead you into others.

SMITH: Is it possible for you to use examples from that book to demonstrate the concept of the prime object from The Shape of Time?

KUBLER: At this distance from that book I think of prime objects more and more as black holes [laughter]--black holes of immense energy, but it is really invisible. Perhaps we don't have any prime objects. We only have reflections of them.

REESE: But was it in a very literal way the writing of

the Ancient America book that focused your attention on that problem of prime object versus masterpiece?

KUBLER: Maybe. I think that book [The Shape of Time] has essentially to do with the experience of pre-Columbian objects, and it shows in the design. There is no illustration excepting in the chapter headings, isn't it?

REESE: I have at least one question about your reactions to the first reviews [of The Art and Architecture of Ancient America] that came out. I'm thinking reviews by anthropologists. Were you surprised?

KUBLER: Oh, I was pleased on the whole with reviews, yes. Even the sharp ones, the sharply critical ones. I welcomed those.

REESE: In other words, that the book could generate controversy about the objects was a very desirable--

KUBLER: Oh, yes, yes. I was glad of controversy. And I don't think there ever was an answer, but I was glad to have it, to know of it.

REESE: Do you feel, in that way, that the book has really advanced the resolution of the problems that you were laying out in controversy?

KUBLER: I've presented the problems, and it has many translations. There are many translations of the book now, many languages. It seems to have a life of its own. And I've never changed a word of it in any of these

editions.

REESE: Actually, I think we've skipped, because I was thinking of Ancient America and you were thinking--

KUBLER: Oh, I thought you meant The Shape of Time.

REESE: Yeah, we had moved to The Shape of Time.

KUBLER: Yes. I've been talking about The Shape of Time for the last minute or two.

SMITH: I was thinking of the use in the Ancient America of the concept of the prime object.

KUBLER: Yes, yes, in principle. I'm thinking about ancient America in that book, but the rest of human art, too.

SMITH: At any rate, perhaps the ancillary question of that is the process by which ancient American art has been turned into masterpieces and joined the canon. Your thoughts on that aspect, and whether canonicity helps us see ancient American art or is an impediment.

KUBLER: Well, that's for the reader to decide. I think it does have a use in understanding the rest of world art. And the rest of world art is useful in knowing satisfactorily American pre-Columbian art. They're part of the same world game which is played everywhere.

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MARCH 30, 1991

KUBLER: Let me see-- For this discussion of The Shape of Time: [Remarks on the History of Things (1962)]-- The existence of all these translations. It's now in its twenty-third printing, and all of these editions seem to put it in a category of being a little work of art itself. There's never any suggestion that I change anything in it. There's all sorts of criticism of concepts in it, but the form of it seems to be irreproachable. Otherwise, why would people keep reading it. Which suggests that it is to be considered as a modest work of art.

SMITH: The Shape of Time appears to me one of several books that had profound impact at their time and mark in some ways an epistemological revolution in American academia. One of which is Thomas [S.] Kuhn's book [The Structure of] Scientific Revolutions.

KUBLER: Same time, yes.

SMITH: Exact same time, and shortly before then was Kenneth Burke's book The Image. So I'm wondering to what degree you were aware of what Kuhn and Burke were doing and what your opinion of their books is.

KUBLER: I didn't have them in mind while I was writing it, no. But I did recognize that family resemblance, of

which I would regard mine as the least important.

SMITH: Stephen Toulmin looks at these books as representing a shift from a Popperian logico-positivism to a relativist point of view in American academic thought. How do you--?

KUBLER: I like that--relativism. Everything is relative to something else. [laughter]

REESE: I wonder if we could turn back to the genesis of The Shape of Time. We talked a little bit yesterday about it, but in May 1959 you had submitted, I believe, the ancient American volume [The Art and Architecture of Ancient America: The Mexican, Maya, and Andean Peoples (1962)]. I don't know, was the Spain and Latin American volume, Art and Architecture in Spain and Portugal[and Their American Dominions, 1500 to 1800], submitted earlier than the Ancient America or finished--?

KUBLER: That was with [Martin] Soria and that was the first book. That was the prior book, and then I persuaded [Nikolaus] Pevsner to admit the Ancient America to the series.

REESE: I'm just trying to think of the chronology of finishing Ancient America and then your illness that you spoke of last night and then the actual writing of The Shape of Time. Do you remember when you first found that you had tuberculosis?

KUBLER: I had a checkup and X ray, and I was told that I better get to Gaylord [Farm] and have the new chemotherapy, which I did. It took about three months, and then we had another three months in Italy. I think that was a really good time, a good period of the writing of the first draft.

REESE: Was that in 1959 or in 1960?

KUBLER: 'Fifty-nine and '60. I had nothing else to do. [laughter]

REESE: Which is precisely, you know, the question of how you went about writing it. You had probably not as much access to your books at home.

KUBLER: No.

REESE: Could you tell us something about what you recall about the process of outlining and actually writing The Shape of Time?

KUBLER: I was in bed a lot of the time and I was thinking. As I was thinking, I would write out ideas that might go into this book, of which I already had the title. These slips were really the first draft. Then, in Italy, I wrote the whole thing out.

REESE: Did you proceed from a general outline?

KUBLER: Before I began writing I had a fair amount outlined, yes.

REESE: Had you ever outlined any of these ideas in

classes? In other words, I'm thinking particularly about the move from very concrete subject matter in the history of art to an abstraction or generalization.

KUBLER: Many of the things in that book are things that I began saying in the methods course in relation to the work of other art historians.

REESE: So they were reflections upon problems that other art historians--?

KUBLER: That had been suggested in that course, which I did for years.

REESE: But there was never an outline of a methods class that would resemble in any way The Shape of Time.

KUBLER: No. This was a new formula--suggested by [Henri] Focillon's book La Vie des formes.

REESE: What reading, if any, did you do during this time you were hospitalized and thinking about The Shape of Time?

KUBLER: I read a lot of Henry James. [laughter]

REESE: Do you think there was any connection between the two?

KUBLER: Well, I wanted to read more and more of Henry James, and I don't think there was any overflow or overlap that I was aware of.

REESE: Thinking again of the process of writing, did you write in a linear way on pads or did you write on

notecards?

KUBLER: The original accumulation of things to develop was on three-by-five cards as they occurred. They fell into place in retrospect when I felt ready to write.

REESE: You were rereading La Vie des formes?

KUBLER: No. I didn't look at it much, no. I remembered it. I remembered its format, and the book came out as almost a twin volume.

REESE: I mean, there's a large number also of references to other disciplines, not only in the physical and natural sciences. Were those from memory or were there books that you would probe for connections?

KUBLER: I was aware of those books without access to them. Then when I got back I could check them, and I made another draft with the references. The text itself could stand without the references, but I think it's more fun with the references. I'm always glad for footnotes. It's a musical voice, it's a different voice. The footnote is a different voice, and it's part of another melody.

REESE: I'm curious about the evolution of the writing. You had an outline early and then you had cards. When you did go to Italy, where you wrote a lot of it-- There were large parts of it already in place by the time you went to Italy. Italy was a polishing of the manuscript?

KUBLER: The pieces of the chapters came into being

gradually as I was writing it and rewriting it. I remember rewriting it completely after I returned to New Haven. So there are really three or four drafts, beginning with these three-by-five jottings.

REESE: Do you remember anything about the decisions that brought you to rewrite it? In other words, what qualities were you searching for in the various drafts?

KUBLER: Internal coherence and development of idea from section to section. It has, what, four or five chapters?

SMITH: Who was the ideal audience for The Shape of Time?

KUBLER: Well, people knowing and concerned about art.

SMITH: Did you expect that your colleagues would be sympathetic to the work?

KUBLER: I didn't know--and I still don't know--whether they are. [laughter]

REESE: Before we leave the question of its writing, I'm particularly curious about the style of the book, which is noted by many for its terseness. Which is distinct, I believe, from many of the other analytical projects, which require a different kind of descriptive and analytical language. Was that something that you were conscious of?

KUBLER: Yes. I intended it to be terse rather than discursive.

SMITH: When you have said that you intended the book to criticize art history from the point of view of social

science, is that in order to adopt a social science rhetoric?

KUBLER: Yes. That's one of the themes of the development, adding a social component to the aesthetic one, a sociological component which runs all through the book.

REESE: I mean, I think it's very interesting that it could be perceived, as you say, as a reflection upon the state of art history as one analyzed it in the methods classes that you had conducted. Which suggests to me that there are, you know, two things working. One is retrospective--analyzing what has been done--and the other is projective, in terms of "there could be."

KUBLER: Yes. That's intentional, and the sociological component is a voice, a constant voice in the composition.

SMITH: To what degree do you think art historical writing has been retarded by the use of everyday, common-sense language? Instead of developing a set of more scientific kinds of terms.

KUBLER: Well, I would prefer to have the consideration of art remain public rather than unapproachable property of a guild such as scientists, physical scientists.

SMITH: I was thinking of the connection with "Towards a Reductive Theory of Visual Style." In that essay, one of the things that you seem to be trying to do is to reshape

the language so that different terms are used to describe common phenomena and the terms are more limited in their definitions.

KUBLER: Or add a few.

SMITH: And add a few.

KUBLER: It's enough to add a few to the stock. It's in constant change anyway. That's one of the meanings of the title.

SMITH: In Shape of Time you add a few concepts which, perhaps-- The prime objects seems to have been a very-- Controversial isn't the right word, but it's been a difficult concept for people because it's idealized.

KUBLER: It is, yes. I still have additional notions about it, such as a black hole. It doesn't exist--or does it exist? But as an excess of energy--as a point of high energy--there must be some relationship.

REESE: To what extent did you want the book to be not only terse but also very open-ended, suggestive rather than concrete?

KUBLER: I hoped for that, that it be suggestive of further thought than mine.

SMITH: Well, if we take The Shape of Time as a self-prescriptive work, to what degree did you follow up on its program in the empirical work that you began doing in the sixties? Did you become more conscious of looking for

prime objects and sequences?

KUBLER: No, I had this out of my system and I went back to my everyday work. But I never really wanted to change anything in The Shape of Time, even with criticisms that I-- I value the criticisms of The Shape of Time, but they don't lead me to revise it. [laughter]

SMITH: Some of the discussion around it suggests that-- Well, people such as James [S.] Ackerman were complaining of a crisis in the state of art history. Were you responding to those kinds of complaints in this book?

KUBLER: Perhaps the general state of affairs in the history of art was inducing me to write this book.

SMITH: Did you feel that there was a crisis?

KUBLER: Well, I would say a stasis rather than a crisis, a stagnation. A condition of stagnation rather than a condition of medical crisis.

SMITH: What was the source of the stagnation?

KUBLER: The persistence of traditional ways of discussing works of art. The persistence of a certain rhetoric which is no more than a fusion.

REESE: You earlier, in response to a question by Richard about Kuhn's book, were talking about that it was part of a certain class of books, perhaps. Can you think of other books that would be of its form, class, that you have read, either previously or subsequently, that you would

put in this constellation? Books like The Shape of Time that you particularly have been engaged by?

KUBLER: I'll give that thought. I can't think of any offhand. Do you have any suggestions?

REESE: No, I really--

KUBLER: [to Smith] And you?

SMITH: Beyond the two that I've mentioned, none that I think would necessarily be relevant to the area that we are talking about. I mean, if we were to pursue Kuhn a little bit, the thing that was so scandalous about Kuhn's position was the idea that there was no objective truth determining scholastic endeavor, but instead these consensual paradigms. If you accept the implications of Kuhn's work, the empirical data that one is working with are not really the determinant factor, but the social relations that scholars are involved in. How did you feel about that?

KUBLER: I thought it was interesting. It was interesting and debatable. In the best sense of debatable was the debate. And it is still under way. He is changing the terms slowly.

SMITH: Yes, I think he retreated from his 1960 statement. But the way you've described your own work methodology, you begin with the objects even and an intuition that there would be a--

KUBLER: I begin with the problems. [laughter]

SMITH: What I thought you said was that you begin with the objects and an intuition that there will be pay dirt in there, and as you dive into the objects the problem emerges and defines itself.

KUBLER: Or is there a beginning with a problem? And then the objects cluster with the problem. Does one find the problem in the objects or does one find the objects with the problem? I suspect I find the object with the problem. This problem must be considered with such and such objects.

SMITH: Let's say if we look at the historical development of your work through The Religious Architecture of New Mexico [in the Colonial Period and since the American Occupation (1940)] and Mexican Architecture of the Sixteenth Century [1948], even the very titles suggest that you start with the objects. And then in your later work, perhaps your titles suggest that you moved towards the problems.

KUBLER: Surface more. Yes. I think that's right.

REESE: Of course, the premise of The Shape of Time is that the objects are made in partial response to a problem.

KUBLER: They are solutions to problems to begin with. And that problem is part of the problem, discovering what

the urgency was.

SMITH: There seems to be an endemic sense of crisis within art history. I was thinking as we were going through this about your 1945 talk, where there's a sense of crisis almost immediately upon the birth of the new art history. Then the late fifties, Ackerman. Then I was thinking, of course, of [Donald] Preziosi's book [Rethinking Art History: Meditations on a Coy Science], which talks about a current sense of crisis. Art history doesn't seem to have a clear idea of what its object is. Do you agree with that sense of art history having a problem of not knowing what its object is?

KUBLER: Well, I think it's a very healthy sign to be concerned about where a profession is going and what for.

REESE: We talked a great deal in respect to Ancient America about the particular attitudes of anthropologists towards defending their territory. The Shape of Time seems to draw upon that larger experience of dealing with non-Western art within the history of art. But The Shape of Time specifically seems to turn back towards the traditional art historians and challenge them. Had you felt, in your own work, not only a certain closure on the part of anthropologists but also on the part of the history of art?

KUBLER: Yes.

REESE: So you mean there were similar closures from that side?

KUBLER: Yes. I think so. There are cracks in the building everywhere. [laughter]

SMITH: But was it a closure of the history of art, or is it a closure that is involved with the Eurocentric tradition? For instance, a tradition which privileges the identity of the individual artist and the concept of genius.

KUBLER: Well, the American evidence, the pre-Columbian American evidence, is fortunately in my opinion independent of Europe's interest, totally independent. The connection with the rest of humanity is so remote now. And the independence of America--of the American development--is increasingly older as the study of this problem continues, making _Ancient America_ a testing ground for theories about art. I think that's part of my idea about _The Shape of Time_.

REESE: I'm trying to think without having it all worked out yet in my own mind about the implications of a universal history of art--as opposed to a more pluralistic view--in which we would say there wasn't a Mesoamerican aesthetic that was distinct from other cultures. Of course, the fact that one is learning from a large body of art historical practice in Europe that one then applies,

or at least applies where relevant, to the pre-Columbian art with the hope that it will elicit new answers-- I'm wondering about the question of whether you in some way feel there is a universal set of paradigms that we can use to elicit information from any and everything, or whether one needs separate--

KUBLER: Well, that's to be tested. The American evidence is increasingly important as one defines such procedures of testing for independence first and then for similarity of developmental pattern--or differences of developmental pattern--in sequences that seem related or similar. Are they related or are they merely similar, you know? Those concerns are very workable, but they have to be done in a systematic way. It's a big enterprise.

REESE: Can you imagine a survey on still a larger scale than those you've done in which you try to do a history of world art finding principles that will allow you to engage in such an enterprise? Or do you think that would be fruitless?

KUBLER: Well, I won't do it. I won't live long enough. But [Colin] Martindale's book [The Clockwork Muse: The Predictability of Artistic Change] is interesting because he's extending Darwin's evolutionary system to a study of very short periods of time with evolutionary changes in these very short periods of time. His periodization is

something like twenty times twenty years. Twenty units of twenty years back of the present. He's looking for evolutionary change in the history of things, the history of ideas. It's an interesting extension of Darwinian evolution to historical time of recent and very short duration. He does it by statistical methods with the arts and with literature and finding evolutionary changes that are defined by a set of equations he's devised. Six sets of equations that seem to describe mathematically these evolutionary changes in language and in art and in technology.

REESE: Since you're reading this book so intensely right now, I really wonder if it might be fruitful to see if we could find out whether, in fact, we're right at the genesis of reflection upon it in the form of an article. Is this the kind of beginning you often--?

KUBLER: I don't know. Martindale sent me the book because he cites The Shape of Time frequently. I wrote him a note thanking him for the book, and I haven't heard from him. But I would like to hear what he has to say.

SMITH: I'm curious to know the degree to which, while you were writing The Shape of Time, you were responding to such articles as Meyer Schapiro's essay on style.

KUBLER: What was the date of that?

SMITH: I think '52.

KUBLER: 'Fifty-two, yes.

SMITH: I was just going to double-check it, but I think it's '52.

KUBLER: I was opposed to that side of Meyer Schapiro's work.

SMITH: Was this something that was perturbing you, in the sense that discussion of Schapiro's work would come up in graduate seminars?

KUBLER: I didn't want to put it in The Shape of Time. I didn't want to attack anyone, but I did disagree with Meyer Schapiro.

REESE: In an article in Perspecta: [The Yale Architectural Journal] which was published in the late sixties, I believe, you made this statement which--

KUBLER: What was the title?

REESE: I don't have it here, but it is on what architects can learn from history.

KUBLER: Oh, yes. That was sort of a tailor-made title made by the tailor.

REESE: I'm looking here for the exact quote, but-- Oh, yes, it's 1965, "What Can Historians Do for Architects?" So the reverse of what I said. You said, and I quote, "The art historian, he is also a kind of policeman, patrolling the beat against the myth makers. It is as if the historian had to apprehend and bring myths to justice.

He has to be on the watch in the public interest for foolish and implausible or outsized, inflated ideas about the present and the past. And since every artist is virtually interested in the myth of himself, a natural empathy often arises between him and the deflating historian who pricks his bubble. Yet the historian is the victim of the very same myth-making process, in that he has to present a compact symbolic notation for what has happened."

KUBLER: That was just rambling speculation.

SMITH: But in "Indianism, Mestizaje, and Indigenismo [as Classical, Medieval, and Modern Traditions in Latin America]," you begin the very first sentence, "Our knowledge of the past runs to stereotypes." Which I think is a logical continuation of that statement.

REESE: I'm just curious what your reactions are to these words.

KUBLER: Well, in both those pieces, those are aperçus, and they're not developed in an orderly way, but written on request.

SMITH: Certainly many art historians consider themselves to be gatekeepers and police officers of the cultural heritage. Are you suggesting another way of looking at these police-keeping functions?

KUBLER: Well, this was written for architects, wasn't it?

Reminding them of the necessity to have some order in the house. [laughter]

REESE: But I'm particularly interested in this role of constantly testing, challenging the established notions.

KUBLER: Or behavior.

REESE: Or behavior. Is this something that you feel has always been with you? I mean, is it something that someone who knew you in the Harkness Hoot would have said about you at a very early age?

KUBLER: Maybe. Maybe it's a temperamental disposition. But constant criticism is difficult, and without criticism architects get lost.

REESE: I was thinking of this not merely as addressed to architects, but whether it would be addressed to art historians in The Shape of Time or anthropologists in Ancient America or to, you know, any group with a territorial boundary to be protected.

KUBLER: Well, I returned to the aperçus. They're undeveloped.

SMITH: Well, I think there are two further questions I'd like to pursue. One is a practical one and perhaps can be wrapped up quickly, which was, did you have any participation in the development of the National Endowment for the Humanities [NEH]?

KUBLER: None.

SMITH: Were colleagues' opinions being solicited as to how the NEH should be established and how the peer-review process might work and what kinds of programs should be funded?

KUBLER: If so, none reached me.

SMITH: The other thing is a little broader. I think we won't really be able to develop it until the next time we get together, but your relationship with [Erwin] Panofsky and the interaction of your thinking with Panofsky's thinking with the publication of _Renaissance and Renascences_. I wonder if you could outline for us what kinds of connections you maintained with Panofsky after you left the Institute [of Fine Arts, New York University] in 1938.

KUBLER: Whenever I was near Princeton [University], I would pay a visit--after telephoning. I remember one very pleasant evening with the family. They were making music. They were a very musical family. They were playing.

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KUBLER: I made perhaps three or four such visits, and then that particular journey was no longer necessary. I was going on my way to Ohio, but my ties to Ohio changed. So I didn't call on Panofsky again, and that's the end of it.

SMITH: So what time frame are we talking about?

KUBLER: Oh, three or four years before 1950.

SMITH: Were you communicating by correspondence?

KUBLER: We corresponded, yes. And when I brought out an article on rib vaults ["A Late Gothic Computation of Rib Vault Thrusts"], he took a great interest in it and wrote me a letter. We've had a continuing correspondence on that topic of rib vault thrusts and their interpretation.

SMITH: Did he have an interest in or knowledge of ancient American art?

KUBLER: He wouldn't talk about it because he didn't know anything.

SMITH: Given the iconographical aspects of the work, whether he would be curious about that--

KUBLER: We usually talked about Gothic architecture, which he was always very much interested in.

REESE: If we could, I'd like to return to the reception

of The Shape of Time following its publication. As colleagues and others might have read the drafts-- Do you remember whom you allowed to read The Shape of Time in draft versions and what kind of discussions might have ensued? Charles Seymour [Jr.] or--?

KUBLER: I think the readers for the press [Yale University Press]-- I never knew who the readers were. But I talked about it with Charles Seymour and with Sumner Crosby and with George [Heard] Hamilton. I talked about it, and I think they all read it. They were interested, but they didn't make any suggestions for changing it.

SMITH: Would they assign it in their classes?

KUBLER: I don't know. I doubt it.

REESE: I was wondering in some way whether they would have felt challenged by the proposals that you were making about a more inclusive art history, whether they would have felt indirectly criticized.

KUBLER: I thought, in talking with them, that they agreed with me and that they felt a sympathy with the argument, those colleagues.

SMITH: We talked earlier, when we began, about-- You mentioned there was a distinct Yale method. We were talking specifically about the forties, in the Focillon tradition, when Focillon was still alive and the tradition was still strong. But at the time that you published The

Shape of Time, did the department still have a cohesive identity and unity? Was there a distinctive Yale art history method that could be traced back to Focillon and around which there was an élan and an agreeability?

KUBLER: Yes. I think it lasted that long. In the fifties was when it changed. The staff changed. We were more eclectic and more kinds of training were on display. [laughter] We were, in a sense, too parochial in the beginning of the history of the department. This opening up in the fifties, in the sixties, was to the benefit and improvement of the department.

SMITH: With Panofsky and the publication of Renaissance and Renascences, that book seemed to have a lot of echoes in your later works and was published as you were finishing up The Shape of Time.

KUBLER: I liked it very much. Very stimulating. Very stimulating book. It still is. It's the most adventurous of his books.

SMITH: Did you see it as a break with what he had been doing previously?

KUBLER: Yes. He had been a very conservative student among the students of Gothic architecture. But in Renaissance and Renascences he broke away with an entirely novel theory of a hierarchy of renascences. Re-beginnings, new beginnings. New beginnings over and over or inside

the last beginning, new beginnings.

SMITH: So was that kind of pattern that you appreciate, that you look for in art historical or intellectual writing, a sense of a model for understanding phenomena that's general but then can be applied to specifics?

KUBLER: Well, in Panofsky's Renaissance and Renascences I found confirmation of what I'd been thinking, in the theoretical parts, which are notably different from what Panofsky had been thinking before he published this. And that in turn is in part made up out of essays he'd been writing.

SMITH: Did this lead to renewed contact, increased levels of communications?

KUBLER: Yes. We corresponded.

SMITH: Did he become someone that you wanted to test your ideas out with?

KUBLER: Well, he was a very busy man, and I didn't want to infringe on his time. [laughter]

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NOVEMBER 18, 1991

SMITH: When we left off last time we had finished talking about The Shape of Time: [Remarks on the History of Things (1962)] and its origin. It appears that at the time you began to consider more deeply some of the questions that [Erwin] Panofsky had raised in Renaissance and Renascences. I wanted to ask you, at this point-- As I said, you began to consider some of the questions raised by Panofsky in Renaissance and Renascences. You had mentioned last time that you renewed your contact with him after 1960-61. I was wondering if you could describe a little bit the nature and the extent of that contact with him.

KUBLER: Well, I was his student when I was at New York University in the Institute of Fine Arts, as it was called, which is up near the Metropolitan Museum [of Art]. He lectured to large classes, and he held a seminar in a business building on Madison Avenue, where we would often go to the bar for the seminar. It was a very enjoyable seminar with some people who later became major figures in the history of art.

SMITH: Now, you had mentioned that after you graduated you maintained some contact with him, primarily over the

question of Gothic architecture.

KUBLER: Yes, it was the rib vault question in which he was interested, and he was interested in the paper ["A Late Gothic Computation of Rib Vault Thrusts"], but he disagreed with parts of it.

SMITH: What was the nature of this disagreement?

KUBLER: Oh, it was over the functioning of the rib.

SMITH: Was it a technical disagreement or a philosophical disagreement? I know sometimes it's hard to separate.

KUBLER: I think it was more of a technical disagreement than a philosophical one.

SMITH: So you had more or less compatible ideas about art history and its practice.

KUBLER: Oh, yes. Very much so. My thought at that time was molded by his. I disagreed with parts of it. I was in essential agreement.

SMITH: On the use of iconology, too.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: What would be the parts that you disagreed with of his approach?

KUBLER: At the moment, it escapes me. But it wasn't a fundamental disagreement. It was a disagreement over minor points.

SMITH: But of course he seems to have been less concerned over questions of form than you are.

KUBLER: That's right. At that time I was more of a morphologist than he was, and he was more of an iconographer than I was.

SMITH: So after Renaissance and Renascences was published and you read that work, you said your contact with him was renewed. Did you initiate that?

KUBLER: Yes. I remember going to his house near Princeton, or in Princeton, at the Institute for Advanced Study [Princeton University], and talking with him there. We were more in agreement than ever.

SMITH: Perhaps you put more emphasis on the principle of disjunction than he did?

KUBLER: Yes. But I think that he was himself concerned to find the disjunctions, and increasingly so as he grew older.

SMITH: If you read Renaissance and Renascences, it's not a theoretical work, particularly. You have to glean paragraphs and sentences out of it to determine the guiding principles of it. Your work is much more crisply articulated in terms of its theoretical foundations.

KUBLER: We were going the same road. I went my way on it, and he went his way on it, but we were going the same road. He was finding the parting lines, the parting frontiers, in Renaissance and Renascences. But he had the wit to give them different names.

SMITH: I wonder in terms of methodological approach, though-- He in his work was very much focused on a specific question and puts forward a solution which has broader implications but which in his presentation makes claims only for the situation it's describing--that is, the divergent views of antiquity and Western art from Charlemagne to the Renaissance.

KUBLER: Yes, he was within that envelope.

SMITH: And your work tends to reach for a more universal kind of--

KUBLER: To expand. To expand the scope of the notion. Yes. The way in which knowledge or practice is perpetuated. And what the lines of fission are.

SMITH: In '59 you wrote "On the Colonial Extinction of the Motifs of Precolumbian Art," which preceded Panofsky's book, though his lectures had been given before then. I'm wondering, how did the concept of disjunction help you achieve some resolution, a partial resolution of some of the questions and disputes that you had, that you were working with, in that article in '59?

KUBLER: Well, I probably worked it out in conjunction with what he had published, so it builds on that book perhaps.

SMITH: Well, your article precedes the book.

KUBLER: My article precedes. This had been part of his

teaching before it was published.

SMITH: So the principle of disjunction-- Yes, this is important. I was wondering if the principle of disjunction was something that you were groping towards, and then his formulation clarifies issues that you were struggling with, but didn't have a clear definition of.

KUBLER: I would hesitate to say how the background for the use of disjunction came about. I don't really remember. He was using it and I was using it, but this was after my article.

SMITH: I'm going to ask you some, in a sense, naive questions in order to get a response from you. You had written that the principal modes of survival of ancient forms are in reality the modes of extinction. And I wonder in the transition from pre-Columbian to colonial art in Mexico or in Peru whether there were any real continuities of any kind.

KUBLER: There were. There were in the continued practice of calendrical manuscript. The preparing of manuscript treatises of native origin on the native calendar and their illustration. These survivals from American antiquity go back very far. It's a very long tradition, and it's very poorly known because of the destruction of the materials.

SMITH: But there was some survival, not just physical

survival, but--

KUBLER: Some survival. And there were schools. For example, the Franciscans had a school for the sons of Indian chiefs.

SMITH: I see.

KUBLER: And people were brought to that school in Mexico City from all over the viceroyalty. They brought together this body of knowledge, and they were encouraged to put it down. This was part of the Franciscan policy. The Franciscans were the great teachers among the mendicants. The Dominicans were more bridges between antiquity and the colonial present. And the Augustinians were more the theologians. Those were the three mendicant orders, and then the Jesuits. The Jesuits arrived, and the Jesuits became the great teachers.

SMITH: Now, in Chicano studies currently, and for the last fifteen years, I think most Chicano studies scholars would argue that the syncretization of Coatlicue with the Virgin Mary in the Virgin of Guadalupe would be an example of the continued survival of pre-Columbian thinking. In your perspective, would that be a true survival? Would that be a continuity?

KUBLER: Well, I wouldn't generalize it before having charted all the modalities of this alleged survival. In whose hands was it? What was the preconquest base? What

was the mendicant purpose, and which of the mendicants was it? Or was it the Jesuits? Who was behind it? It's a very complicated issue. Much of this material is without any indication of its place of origin or tribal group. But one suspects that there are a few types that were frequently repeated. The area between those types was lost. Those types were adapted for survival. Any Amerindian approach to the idea of a virgin mother would have been picked up.

SMITH: Let's assume that the only evidence was art objects, painting, architecture, etc. Could we tell solely from a history of art where the source of such syncretizations came from? Whether they came from an Amerindian artist or from the priests and the colonial authorities?

KUBLER: It might be difficult to decide the question on the evidence that is available, but one can speculate. In some cases it's very clear how intense the European molding was, and in other cases it's very clear how intense the survival of native modalities was. It changes. It's constantly increasing, with more and more material being discovered, especially in mural painting. New murals are being discovered frequently. I would say that's the most frequent terrain of discovery, rather than the discovery of new manuscripts.

SMITH: Is there a relationship between cultural survivals and demographics? For instance, would one expect to find more cultural survivals in Guatemala or Bolivia because of the much higher percentage of Amerindian population?

KUBLER: Well, it depends on the period and the date. At an early date, whether it's Guatemala or Peru or Mexico, there are few Europeans, and the European population is surprisingly slow to increase. It probably increases faster than the Indian population decreases--it never becomes an overwhelming number of people. It's always a limited and threatened number of whites among a huge Indian population wherever the populations are large. But the demographic study is constantly changing with fresh evidence. All sorts of new evidence.

SMITH: Are you thinking of anything in particular now?

KUBLER: Well, for example, the feather paintings. The feather paintings in European style became known, and more and more of them are known. Every now and then some more show up. These are strictly Amerindian techniques and much valued by the Europeans, who were the customers for it, for the feather industries, which had been very widespread in Mexico, particularly, and Guatemala before the conquest.

SMITH: This raises a question of how one defines an artist, or the artist. I was thinking of Otto von Simson,

who in his book on Chartres Cathedral [The Gothic Cathedral: Origins of Gothic Architecture and the Medieval Concept of Order] says that one has to define the artist in a broad sense so it includes Abbot Suger and the artisans and the burghers who put up the money, etc. How do you go about defining "the artist"?

KUBLER: Well, I would think of it as the artisan. I don't think the artist had any reality in these populations, these native populations, but the artisan had a real standing. He had a guild standing. The feather workers were analogous to a guild.

SMITH: So you are saying the feather painters would not have to have someone tell them to do paintings in European style. Once they determined there would be a market for such paintings, they would do those paintings on their own initiative.

KUBLER: They did so into the seventeenth century, and later. There are eighteenth-century examples. It becomes less and less common.

SMITH: Because of changing European tastes or--?

KUBLER: Yes, and the increasing availability of painted canvas, canvases. And murals above all. Murals were the cheap way of decoration over large areas. Much less expensive than feather painting or easel painting or altar painting. The mural is constantly being discovered.

Examples of sixteenth-century origin under many, many coats of plaster. So that the finds are numerous, and the corpus is increasing. There are very diligent scholars of these murals, like Constantín Reyes Valerio in Mexico City, who believes that this was a great body of sixteenth-century art in Mexico, the mural.

SMITH: These were executed by Amerindian artists?

KUBLER: These were executed by Amerindian or mestizo artisans.

SMITH: Trained by Europeans?

KUBLER: Trained, perhaps, by Europeans, and some of them having European names. But not many of them had names. [laughter] The big field of production was the mural, in the churches, the cemeteries, the chapels. An enormous lot of mural painting was achieved and probably using a native or a mestizo artisanate.

SMITH: When you evaluate the question of survival and disjunction, how much weight do you give to imagery, to technique, and to the system of thought that the work is part of?

KUBLER: Well, with Christian iconography the weight is very heavily in favor of a non-Indian source. [laughter] In the painting of murals for Christian churches and sites, the pressure to conform to Christian patterns is very great. The Indian character is betrayed in certain

details of execution, the way of rendering a feather, the way of rendering a garment.

SMITH: Now, the way of rendering a feather or a garment, would you consider that evidence of cultural survival?

KUBLER: Yes, as much so as survival of a word in the Indian usage. A word that was of Indian origin and known to enough Europeans to slip over into colonial usage.

SMITH: Again, I come back to this phrase from the essay that you wrote: "The principal modes of survival of ancient forms are in reality the modes of extinction." So that would imply that the appearance of an Indian image in a Catholic mural actually is evidence of how the Indian system of thought has been subverted, broken up, and its elements reincorporated into the colonial system of thought.

KUBLER: By the seventeenth century, the incidence of such native elements is less and less. In the eighteenth century, it's almost altogether wiped out. There are eighteenth-century copies of older work where a native presence is present, is noted, but less and less.

SMITH: I wanted to move on to some of the specific studies that you did in the 1960s on pre-Columbian art. The first thing I want to discuss was the seminars that you developed on Teotihuacán that seemed to be held over a two- to three-year period of time in 1965 to '67. When

you began the seminars, were you thinking of a publication coming out of that work?

KUBLER: I forget. I forget whether I ever had a coherent plan. But the seminar was well attended, and I used some of it for my own work, not the students' part, but my own contributions. I never had time enough for that side of it.

SMITH: For which side of it?

KUBLER: For the precolonial presence.

SMITH: In colonial--

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: But Teotihuacán focused on--

KUBLER: Teotihuacán would be another case. That's a case of a very imposing political presence throughout Mesoamerica, Teotihuacán. And that's a problem that is still incompletely charted.

SMITH: Oh, the history of that source of power.

KUBLER: It's as though we knew that Rome existed, but we weren't sure where the receiving ends were and what the channels were. What the influence of Teotihuacán is-- Endemic throughout Mesoamerica. And what connection is it? Is it a memory of a revealed civilization, or is it coeval with the vanished civilization? Or--

SMITH: When you organize a seminar on a topic such as Teotihuacán, you have a topic which is still largely

unexplored.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: Does that pose opportunities for students that they would not have, say, in a seminar on the history of Rome? Does it pose the possibility of doing more original research?

KUBLER: Well, I don't know that it would be different as to type. It might fit into a method, a method of investigating cultural dependence given the evidence of works of painting, architecture, sculpture, pottery, etc.--material crafts that are the evidence. But how far can you push that evidence without more excavations? Of course, those are going on all the time, and more and more evidence is being assembled all the time. But those conclusions are already in the literature. It's as though the yield from more excavation was dwindling. The more there is, the less interesting it is, because it's redundant. The evidence is redundant.

SMITH: But still necessary.

KUBLER: But you never know what the transformations are that are going on underneath the appearance of similarity.

SMITH: Was that one of the goals that you were trying to achieve in this seminar?

KUBLER: That was the sort of thinking that we worked with. How can you be sure that the resemblance of

architectures of the Valley of Mexico with those around Guatemala City are coeval? Or is it a case of a renaissance? Is it a case of a rebirth elsewhere? So then techniques of dating are critical.

SMITH: Who were involved in these seminars? Do you recall any of the particular individuals?

KUBLER: They were graduate students, undergraduates. People like Mary Miller, whom you know.

SMITH: Yes. She has since gone on to do some very important work in that field.

KUBLER: Oh, yes.

SMITH: Were there other former students in the seminars who have gone on to--?

KUBLER: Yes, there are a lot of them, but none of them so productive and successful as Mary.

SMITH: Was Joyce Bailey in any of these seminars?

KUBLER: Yes, but she was a little unstable in her persistence with a problem with which she identified. Joyce Bailey was-- Do you know her?

SMITH: No, I don't.

KUBLER: Joyce Bailey was inclined to hop around.

SMITH: I mean, I know she did--

KUBLER: She didn't have a permanent post for a long time, and I think there was some health problem.

SMITH: So that undercut her ability to make a

contribution.

KUBLER: She wasn't so successful as Mary.

SMITH: What about Flora [S.] Clancy? Was she in those seminars?

KUBLER: Flora Clancy is a very successful member of that group. She's at Tulane [University], and she's a successor to Donald Robertson. Her work is very highly regarded among art historians. I don't know how well she fares with the anthropologists. I would think that her diction is too much art historical for anthropological consumption.

SMITH: What was the general structure of those seminars? How did you pose the problem to the students? Of course, they all had to do research papers, but--

KUBLER: That's essentially it.

SMITH: Was this a semester-long seminar or a year-long seminar?

KUBLER: I would make them weekly for a couple of hours and begin with information and set them to picking a topic as quickly as possible and then guiding them in the execution of the research.

SMITH: Did you assign the topics or--?

KUBLER: No. If the student was unable to decide, I'd pick something and suggest that this would be workable. There were numbers of those.

SMITH: I was looking at some of the papers, and the topics seemed--if you don't mind me saying so--somewhat esoteric, but in a positive sense, in that they were very focused and very detailed. It struck me these were not topics that someone coming new to the field, as one presumes a graduate student to be, would necessarily come to by him or herself.

KUBLER: Well, I sometimes overestimated the working ability of the student and suggested a topic that defeated the student.

SMITH: Without necessarily mentioning the name of the student, can you think of topics that were particularly troublesome?

KUBLER: Well, it wasn't that they were troublesome topics so much as that the students weren't committed enough.

SMITH: Okay.

KUBLER: A student with a degree of commitment was able to do the research.

SMITH: So was all the necessary research available in secondary sources?

KUBLER: No, it would require being able to read Spanish easily. The work couldn't be done adequately using English alone.

SMITH: Were there special archival sources in terms of photographs that the students had to pursue?

KUBLER: Well, they could use the repertory of publications on the subject. That would be adequate. And if the argument proposed was well supported, that was okay.

SMITH: Some of the papers seem to be-- I'm maybe using the wrong term, but taking a census of the appearance of certain kinds of motifs to get across what seem-- I forget the exact number, but a quite large number of distinct monuments within Teotihuacán. I presume all those sources were also available in the printed repertoires of the--

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: But is there a question of judgment whether a motif is present or not, or is it simply pretty straightforward? One would look at the photograph of the bas-relief, for instance, and be able to determine on a simple yes or no basis?

KUBLER: Well, to detect the changes owing to remoteness between the centers, such as Guatemala City and Mexico City, is important. But it sometimes is--and mostly is--way beyond the resources of the student, because the student can't go to Guatemala City and test the clays.

SMITH: Right.

KUBLER: So it has to be done with available knowledge.

SMITH: How reliable is work based solely on photographic duplications?

KUBLER: Well, it's not anywhere near adequate. One needs to have access to the specimens themselves. And that means a lot of travel. Sometimes a paper was convincing enough on very limited evidence to merit praise, but with cautions about publication without further research, without going to Guatemala and Teotihuacán. Because very often the students had never been to any of the sites. They'd only heard about them in the course or read about them. But that's a limitation of any field.

SMITH: From your point of view, what were some of the topics that were researched that were particularly important? Where the students came up with a really genuine insight into the questions surrounding Teotihuacán and cultural transformation and disjunction?

KUBLER: Well, I would say that in a group of five or six that there would be two or three good papers, and the rest were not to be taken seriously.

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SMITH: That would be primarily because of the quality of the thought, I would assume, and analysis.

KUBLER: Yes. The good papers stood out. The not so good papers stood out the other way.

SMITH: But in terms of topics, in a field like pre-Columbian art, a choice of a topic, how important is that?

KUBLER: Well, there's always the question of feasibility. Is this feasible? I would often reject a number of proposals before a viable one appeared or was suggested. Or I would end up suggesting one.

SMITH: How well versed were these students in pre-Columbian art history before they took the seminar?

KUBLER: Well, they might have come from an anthropology course. They might have been fired up by a summer trip. They might have been reading on their own. Very often these students in the seminar were people who had been in my lecture course.

SMITH: But it sounds like there may in fact have been a number of students who came into the seminar with basically zero knowledge of the scholarly--

KUBLER: They generally came in innocent.

SMITH: Well, that has its pluses as well.

KUBLER: But more or less motivated, and more or less able to decide what to do.

SMITH: I raise this question in part because as I was looking through your papers, I saw a number of letters to you from professors and students at other institutions saying, "I'm interested in doing my dissertation on such and such, and I understand that so-and-so, who's working with you, is doing his or her dissertation on a similar topic. Do you have any objection?" And it struck me as unusual, because for instance in Italian Renaissance, no one thinks twice that of course there are going to be a hundred dissertations a year on topics that overlap. Yet in pre-Columbian, there seems to be enough of a concern about not overlapping that a certain amount of trouble was taken, care to write to the people involved.

KUBLER: Well, that's a penalty of a small enrollment. A small number of candidates for the seminar.

SMITH: Would you advise students not to write on something that you knew that somebody else was writing on?

KUBLER: If that was the case, yes. I would say, "Oh, so-and-so is doing this. Get in touch and see what the situation is."

SMITH: In European art history you increase the knowledge by having competing viewpoints on the same subject matter, and that value did not seem to be appreciated by pre-

Columbian scholars.

KUBLER: It's too thinly populated in the history of art. Too thinly populated. So one hates to lose a student. In other fields, one is glad to lose a lot of students. [laughter]

SMITH: Well, you've taught a lot of European art classes as well.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: How would you compare the difficulty of taking a seminar in European art with the difficulty of taking a seminar in pre-Columbian art? That's highly subjective I know, but--

KUBLER: Well, I think probably the rarity of such studies in the American case is part of the interest. Whereas in the much more thickly populated European fields, good students are rare. The possibility of doing good work is more difficult in European studies.

SMITH: Are Iberian studies, Peninsular studies, thickly populated?

KUBLER: I would say no. They would be like pre-Columbian studies. One has to know a good deal.

SMITH: Did you concern yourself about getting students? Did you feel that you had to make sure that you always had enough graduate students to work with you? We were talking at lunch about client demand. Is that something

that was of concern to you?

KUBLER: The undergraduate courses usually had twenty people in them, sometimes more. The undergraduate course was where they acquired the basic knowledge to go farther. A few showed up that way. It doesn't take very many people to have a good seminar. You can have a good seminar with three.

SMITH: In fact, if you have too many people, it's counterproductive.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: I noted that the translation of Felix da Costa's _Antiquity of_ [_the Art of_] _Painting_ was also connected to a student project. Is that--? It's the translation itself and the study of it.

KUBLER: I've forgotten what the situation was in that case. I had no trouble with Portuguese, reading Portuguese. I don't remember any difficulties with the language.

SMITH: What I was wondering-- Actually, what fascinated me was that two of your works in the sixties, the Felix da Costa work and the iconography of the art of Teotihuacán, seem to grow out of seminars that you did, and that seems unusual to me.

KUBLER: Well, that was the way it was then. You taught a certain number of courses, undergraduate courses, and then

your graduate work came out of those results. We had a lot of students at that time.

SMITH: The history of art department?

KUBLER: Yes, yes. And still do.

SMITH: When did the history of art department population begin to grow? When would you say the explosion came?

KUBLER: Well, it was after the forties.

SMITH: So already in the 1950s.

KUBLER: It was already notable in the fifties, and it had begun in the forties with the presence of the French scholars, [Henri] Focillon and [Marcel] Aubert, both of them medievalists. They attracted many students. And they both lectured always in French.

SMITH: The students whom you worked with closely, the students who chose you to work with as their adviser, would you say that they were different from other students at Yale [University] in the art history program?

KUBLER: No. They happened to have an interest in the subject, or feigned an interest in the subject.

SMITH: So they weren't particularly brighter than other art history students or more methodical in some way.

KUBLER: No. The same sort of people. But with an interest in this side of the world.

SMITH: Might there not also be--? If we see a tension within art history between the essayistic and the

scientific, would they not tend to gravitate towards a scientific approach, an approach that tries to topologize and typologize?

KUBLER: Yes. They were sensitive about method. Or they had become sensitive about method, historical method.

SMITH: I mean, because I assume-- In fact, within the art history department at Yale, there were divisions.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: There were people who did not appreciate--to use your terminology--a methodological approach to art history, who favored a more interpretive approach. I think of Vincent Scully in particular, who was vocally critical.

KUBLER: That's right.

SMITH: I wanted to discuss The Iconography of the Art of Teotihuacan [1967], the text-image conjunction and disjunctions that you were studying. I wonder if we could start out by your posing the problem as you remember it when you began the study. What was your initial perception of the problem of text-image relationships at Teotihuacán?

KUBLER: Well, I saw it as a problem in communication with images of objects rather than symbols of writing. Teotihuacán does not seem to have had an extended system of writing like that of the Mayas, and this was itself of

interest. The dependence upon highly stylized parts of bodies, animal and human, and graphic schemes for ideas. But no extended system of writing like that of the Mayas.

SMITH: So in your opinion at that time, what needed to be done to understand these images of Teotihuacán? What was inadequate with scholarship up to that point? Not that it was bad scholarship, but what was lacking?

KUBLER: Well, fundamentally, what was needed was concentration on single forms in multiple contexts.

SMITH: Meaning like the jaguar form?

KUBLER: Multiple contexts could be found, and compare the contexts. And what are the crossovers? When a jaguar form is on a human form, or not. When a human form is on a jaguar.

SMITH: Now, how did that differ from what had previously been done?

KUBLER: Well, it was an extension of what had been done previously.

SMITH: So you were not necessarily breaking new ground?

KUBLER: No.

SMITH: You were simply trying to do--

KUBLER: Extending a method of determining the scope of a form such as a foot.

SMITH: Well, how much did you utilize previous studies? Such as those by [Eduard] Seler or [Hermann] Beyer or

[Alfonso] Caso.

KUBLER: They were basic, and they were used by the students. Whereas the state of my books shows-- [laughter]

SMITH: Yes. I was wondering, in terms of other text-image studies-- In your seminars and in yourself personally, how helpful did you find, say, Kurt Weitzmann's work on text and image in Byzantine art or Wickoff's work on the Greek and Roman friezes? Were those useful to you in terms of trying to conceptualize your problem and arrive at a solution?

KUBLER: Not really, because of the variable factor of the presence of writing. The concept of writing is limited, very severely limited, in Maya practice. It's a very limited form of writing. The number of statements that can be made in this Maya system is not large.

SMITH: I noticed that you have-- I mean, you observe that the primary statement is the naming of somebody or something. So therefore the art itself becomes the main purveyor of the story.

KUBLER: You don't know what it means. You don't know what it means, but you can classify it by its appearance. Its appearance and its context. This drives the problem into smaller and smaller scope, so that a student would end up by looking at the occurrence of hands and feet in

the same position.

SMITH: So simply the position.

KUBLER: In the same cartouche. When a foot and a hand are in a cartouche, it means they've been isolated for possible meaning.

SMITH: A possible meaning, which had--

KUBLER: A possible meaning that is undetermined.

SMITH: But was it determinable? Was that a goal?

KUBLER: It wouldn't be determinable, but one might extend the scope of it and find that it had a determined meaning, or proposed determined meaning, and test it against other occurrences of hands and feet.

SMITH: So you have bodies. So you can develop a range of expressions?

KUBLER: A range of expressions, yes.

SMITH: I'm still considering how you developed your models for the design of the study. So the next thing I'd like to talk about is the nature of the taxonomies based on binaries and why binaries seem to you an important way of analyzing that material.

KUBLER: Well, examination of the repertory at a place like Xochicalco or Teotihuacán shows a variety, a difference of vocabulary. The presence of a vocabulary--the assumed presence of a vocabulary--and differences from site to site would suggest linguistic difference. How far

can you go with that? Very often a student would accept an assignment and come with a result which seemed to lead in the direction that was apparent to us both. I'd encourage the student farther along that line.

SMITH: Can you think of any specific examples that were particularly impressive?

KUBLER: I've forgotten. These are very rudimentary problems of method in an unknown language. A language that one is not sure of at all.

SMITH: Now, you were talking about trying to chart change, yet you were treating the monuments synchronically.

KUBLER: I tried to avoid the suggestion that the meanings were very stable over long periods. Preferring the analysis of differences as indicative of some change of meaning, rather than assuming that resemblance was always the clue to meaning. Differences of association are suggestive of difference of meaning.

SMITH: So again an extension of linguistic principles?

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: Were you reading much in semiotics at this time? Did you and your students examine semiotic theory?

KUBLER: Well, it was very much in the air, and it was talked about. Language was recognized as a very important component of the history of art, the reflections of the

language in images and vice versa.

SMITH: At any point did you consider that you would need to do computer programming to do the kind of analysis that you wanted to do?

KUBLER: It wasn't that complicated. It wasn't that abundant. The evidence wasn't abundant enough for recording in that fashion and manipulating in that fashion. We were manufacturing symbols. We were manufacturing what might be symbols that could be handled when abundant and frequent enough in computer language, in computer treatment.

SMITH: How did you and your students work on this? Did you develop a system of cards with a symbol and then--?

KUBLER: Well, it depended upon the problem. Each problem required a different method, a different procedure.

SMITH: But you had to determine frequency in the specific location, did you not?

KUBLER: I remember we never had very large numbers to deal with.

SMITH: Well, ninety-seven lexical items seems somewhat large to me. I mean, I know that's small compared to what computers can handle.

KUBLER: It could be handled by ordinary methods. So much bookkeeping can. Just plain bookkeeping, old-fashioned bookkeeping of occurrence and variation.

SMITH: What remained unresolved at the end of the study for you? I mean, you had your proposed solutions, but what remained unresolved in your own mind that might demand further work, if not from you, from other people?

KUBLER: Oh, carry it farther. I remember occasionally reassigning a problem to another student after the first one had left and having the benefit of an accumulation by the first student. With that student's permission, the other one continued. That's the way theses and dissertations get generated.

SMITH: How many theses and dissertations were generated out of this work?

KUBLER: I've lost count.

SMITH: That many.

KUBLER: Oh, I never kept count. [laughter] It's probably a small count.

SMITH: A small count, but nonetheless--

KUBLER: But in fifty years I must have taught five hundred people at this level of seminar work.

SMITH: And how many would go on to do dissertations? Or how many did go on to do dissertations?

KUBLER: One or two a year. One or two a year would be going for a degree. But a degree that required other work as well. They weren't taking degrees for work in pre-Columbian studies.

SMITH: They weren't?

KUBLER: No. They were taking degrees for work in the history of art. And their pre-Columbian work was part of their course work.

SMITH: But some of them went on and did their dissertations on pre-Columbian subjects.

KUBLER: Some of them did, and others did other subjects. Of the five hundred, I would think there were perhaps, over the years, less than fifty.

SMITH: Who did pre-Columbian--

KUBLER: Who did pre-Columbian theses or dissertations. Or attempted.

SMITH: Yes, attempted.

KUBLER: So many attempt and don't finish.

SMITH: Yes. Well, that's--

KUBLER: But about fifty, I'd say. About one a year. Some years, no one.

SMITH: Another conceptual model that seemed to be important in that study was [Claude] Lévi-Strauss's *bricolage*.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: Again, what drew you to that concept? It also seems that you are extracting from Lévi-Strauss's this one concept and taking it out of the bulk of his thought.

KUBLER: Well, *bricolage* is a term of little respect.

[laughter] It's a castoff of the household wares that accumulate in a family. That's bricolage. It's odds and ends that are left over from other activities. Now, Lévi-Strauss's idea of bricolage is promoted to a cultural principle. But it has the same name. It's odds and ends left over. Odds and ends left over, worn out. I ought to look up bricolage in-- But that's the general meaning of bricolage.

SMITH: And a bricoleur is a handyman, crafts.

KUBLER: Yes. Bricolage. All sorts of craft work of doubtful value.

SMITH: It's the word for do-it-yourself.

KUBLER: Yes, that's it. And he made it into a cultural principle.

SMITH: What was it about that principle that you felt was particularly relevant to the Mesoamerican studies?

KUBLER: Well, the plainness, the lack of complication of much of the production in pottery, for example. The pottery systems are not of great complexity. I don't know if Lévi-Strauss would have called them part of bricolage. I think he was applying it to concepts.

SMITH: That's my understanding.

KUBLER: A mess of ideas, a mess of notions, would be his concept of bricolage. Cultural history. Not very well understood and not properly used and--

SMITH: Productively not properly used.

KUBLER: Left over from better applications.

SMITH: In your seminars, you and the students would be reading or reporting on semiotics, structural anthropology, and so forth. Would those be parts of the way you structured the--?

KUBLER: If that became part of the problem, yes.

SMITH: Then not for the class as a whole, but you would say to student A, "I think in order to resolve this, you need to think about what Lévi-Strauss has to say."

KUBLER: That would be the process.

SMITH: What would be the common readings for the entire class? I tried to find it in your files, and I couldn't.

KUBLER: It would always depend upon the interest of the student. If the student's interest was in pottery, the literature on that pottery would be his reading, or her reading.

SMITH: What about the common reading for the class? The reading that--

KUBLER: There really wasn't any common reading.

SMITH: Oh, okay.

KUBLER: When my Pelican books came out, one was pre-Columbian [The Art and Architecture of Ancient America: The Mexican, Maya, and Andean Peoples (1962)] and the other was Latin America [Art and Architecture in Spain and

Potugal and Their American Dominions, 1500 to 1800 (1959)]. Those had bibliographies, and I assigned those. But before that, I assigned that kind of bibliography as was required in the Pelican volumes.

SMITH: You would not have everybody read the same article and come back and discuss it?

KUBLER: No. We would discuss an idea. We would discuss a book, yes, that had been assigned. Yes.

SMITH: What might be that assigned book? I'm thinking in particular the-- Say the Teotihuacán seminars or the Maya seminars.

KUBLER: Well, I would assign them the best book that was then out. That changed every few years. It was a very rapidly changing field.

SMITH: Well, I get the drift. So the reading would tend to be technical, and methodological readings would be individual.

KUBLER: If it was Teotihuacán I'd have them read as much as they could in the languages they knew and make a selection of evidence.

SMITH: Might someone go and read Lévi-Strauss, say a chapter out of The Savage Mind, and come back and report on the concept of bricolage?

KUBLER: I don't remember that ever happening, but it could have.

SMITH: It could have, but you don't remember it.

KUBLER: I've really lost track of many of those projects. Let's say there were five hundred. [laughter]

SMITH: Keeping on the subject of Teotihuacán as our kind of main focus, to discuss the mesa redonda in 1966, where I think you caused some problems for a lot of people because you argued there was no real continuity between the Teotihuacán civilization and the Aztecs. I don't think this was particularly-- It wasn't a brand-new position for you at that time, was it?

KUBLER: No, I had held that view for a long time.

SMITH: But apparently at this mesa redonda you caused a considerable amount of controversy.

KUBLER: Well, that was contrary to the opinions then held by Mexican principals.

SMITH: Do you recall any of the specific reactions of people at the conference?

KUBLER: No. And if there was disagreement, it was not expressed to me. I don't remember disagreement on that point.

SMITH: We have to discuss your continuing relationship with anthropologists, but perhaps the Tikal project would be the better place to discuss that. But what about--? Here you are putting forward a position which runs counter to the official state ideology of the PRI [Partido

Revolucionario Institucional] and the Mexican government. Did this cause you any problems?

KUBLER: No. It may have limited my activity, but I was already overactive.

SMITH: What do you mean it may have limited your activity? In what sense do you mean that?

KUBLER: If I had wanted to proceed farther with a topic dealing with Teotihuacán and going into it more deeply than I had, I would probably have been discouraged from doing so.

SMITH: By the Mexicans?

KUBLER: By the Mexicans.

SMITH: And they would have discouraged-- You mean by limiting your access to sources and materials?

KUBLER: Permits to excavate-- But I never wanted to be an excavator.

SMITH: Right, yeah.

KUBLER: I was excavating ideas. [laughter]

SMITH: And you had a lot of other people to accumulate the--

KUBLER: Yes. I had benefited from the work of other people, and I always acknowledged it.

SMITH: What visually in the material from Teotihuacán suggested the inadequacy to you of explanations that everybody else seemed perfectly happy with? That is, what

visually suggested to you the idea that a continuity between Teotihuacán and the Aztecs was preposterous?

KUBLER: Well, first of all, the collapse of Teotihuacán is seven centuries before the Aztec domination of the Valley of Mexico. Seven centuries. That's a long time. And the reappearance of Teotihuacano motifs in Aztec iconography is uncommon, as uncommon as the reappearance of classical Greek fifth-century forms seven hundred years later. Teotihuacán was in a way like Greek art. A coherent system of images and sounds and meanings of which the meaning was forgotten.

SMITH: You could see this, but why was it that very few other people-- Nobody else. The people who were working with the material couldn't see it.

KUBLER: Mexican nationalism holds the Aztecs in the highest repute. And everything fed into the Aztec civilization. Everything else fed into it. But that isn't proven. A lot of it had been discarded and forgotten over the past, over the Mesoamerican past. That would be giving the Aztecs a credit they didn't deserve.

SMITH: Well, okay. We can see why the Mexican politicians would-- After all, by and large, they're not trained in any-- They may be educated men--

KUBLER: Yes. If it's Mexican, it's Aztec.

SMITH: But what about anthropologists or other art

historians? Other people who looked at the material, and they saw continuities where you saw ruptures. How did you explain for yourself this division in professional opinion?

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SMITH: How did you explain that you saw rupture, but most of the other scholars dealing with this material chose to see continuity?

KUBLER: I was persuaded. I persuaded myself that the ruptures were more apparent than the continuities. And the arguments for that are in this book.

SMITH: In [The Art and Architecture of]Ancient America: [The Mexican, Maya, and Andean Peoples (1962)].

KUBLER: In Ancient America, yes. It was largely based upon an intuitive sense of how continuous can a non-European civilization be supposed to be. Its continuity is probably less likely than that of European civilizations. The pressures to continuity are greater in European history than they are in pre-Columbian society, where the centers of development were very widely distributed. The centers of development were very thinly populated, so that wide communication, blankets of communication, didn't exist. The extinction of patterns of continuity in ancient America was far greater than in Europe.

SMITH: My question to you is not so much to rehash the logical argument you constructed, because that is in your

written work. How did you explain to yourself the fact that you saw ruptures when so many other people saw continuities? How did you explain the discrepancy between your vision and their vision?

KUBLER: Well, more or less the principle I just outlined, which I had used in teaching when I was teaching both medieval studies and American studies. The disruption of European civilization by the Middle Ages was much less than the disruptions which were apparent in the meager record of far fewer people in America.

SMITH: I don't mean to belabor you with this point, but my question is not so much a question of the historical record, but of historical vision and interpretation.

KUBLER: Yes, yes.

SMITH: So assuming that you're completely right--which for the purposes of these interviews we must assume--how come all these other people were so blind?

KUBLER: Well, I believe most archaeologists would not disagree with what I'm saying. Those who would disagree are Mexican or Peruvian nationalists who have much greater investments, moral and otherwise, in the theory of big continuities, unruptured continuities of civilization.

SMITH: Okay.

KUBLER: But, actually, their archaeological record is extremely disrupted, and repeatedly disrupted.

SMITH: What about European and American anthropologists? I mean, Gordon Willey said you chose to see plurality because you were an art historian, but he as an anthropologist chose to see-- What was the word he used? Unity, I believe.

KUBLER: I think anthropologists are more inclined to read civilization as continuous, and art historians are more inclined to see it as discontinuous, more fragmented.

SMITH: More fragmented. What is there, in your mind, about the art historical methodology and the intellect of vision that you've developed that requires you, if in doubt, to see difference and rupture?

KUBLER: The archaeological record is misleading. Well, it suggests very long continuities. The historical record is misleading when it doesn't suggest continuities.

SMITH: I mean, an anthropologist will see a foot turned--

KUBLER: An anthropologist will see continuity where an historian will see rupture.

SMITH: So, I mean, to give a gross example, if an anthropologist sees a foot done in the same way over a thousand-year period, and if everything else in the two images is completely different, they'll still say, "Aha. The feet are the same, so therefore it's--"

KUBLER: The feet are the same. And the art historian won't say that. It's a vision.

SMITH: But why? I mean, in your own mind. I mean, I know you can't speak for the anthropologists--

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: Well, you probably will at some point in this interview, but why, particularly in the art historical--? Was there something in the training you received from [Henri] Focillon and [Erwin] Panofsky and [Karl] Lehmann that says--?

KUBLER: One is trained to see differences of quality.

SMITH: Right.

KUBLER: I think that may be the answer to your question. The training, as to quality, as to richness and expressiveness and multiple dimensionality, is part of the training of the art historian. The anthropologist doesn't care for those kinds of distinctions. The anthropologist wants to bundle things up more securely. The anthropologist is looking for continuities. The art historian is not. As a matter of fact, he distrusts continuity.

SMITH: Now, that implies something about the nature of the artistic act and how much autonomy one gives to the artist. Whether one defines the artist individually or collectively. Is that correct? I mean, would that be a correct inference?

KUBLER: Well, you can put it on a quantitative basis. On

the head count of styles. Your styles. Your styles of pottery production. Your styles of pottery production in Europe and in the ancient world, apart from America, are innumerable. Innumerable. Unnumbered. The archaeological recovery of the American past has very few styles. Too few styles.

SMITH: But you've also said earlier today that we're uncovering more and more and more, so that would suggest that our conclusions are based to some degree, for better or worse, on inadequate information compared to what we could have.

KUBLER: But the more archaeology there is in America, the less fundamental difference is being found in expression, in all of the things that are important to the art historian or the person concerned with European art. Those qualities are not so urgently present to the anthropologist as they are to the art historian. It's the difference between the thinking of the art historian and the social scientist. The old figures for population of this hemisphere were-- The old figure, which was first published about 1911, was that the total population--Indian population, native population--was no more than 11 or 12 million people. Then some population counts were published by historians and ethnologists which made it necessary to raise that figure. They couldn't raise it to

more than 25 million, and 25 million is probably too many. And 11 million may be too small. But let's say somewhere in between--15 million people, the size of a city. The size of--

SMITH: Of course, Europe was not that highly populated in the early Middle Ages.

KUBLER: And yet the area is smaller.

SMITH: True.

KUBLER: And the cultural happening is on a much rapider belt than in America.

SMITH: You were saying in the pause that perhaps the need for change increases with the increase in population density.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: What prompts you to think that?

KUBLER: Well, more has to be made. More of everything has to be made. And it wears out.

SMITH: And more individuals are involved.

KUBLER: And taste changes, and more people are involved. It's not merely the manufacture of the women outside the tent. It's a different world. It's an utterly different world as far as expression is concerned. The values that are expressed are different.

SMITH: All right. Now, when we get to Studies in Classic Maya Iconography [1969], there you switch from the

synchronic mode of the Teotihuacán book to a diachronic mode, to focus precisely on the question of the dynamism of this imagery.

KUBLER: There's more of it, and it's in a much smaller area. And it's an intense and restless operation. Whereas Teotihuacán is a-- The earliest Teotihuacán objects are of around the time of Christ, or not older than 1000 B.C., but with an ending point at 700 A.D. And the reassembling of those impulses is very slow from the 700s to about 1400. But the Aztec phenomenon is very brief and very superficial. It's deeply rooted, but it isn't a phenomenon of large populations over long periods. We know so little about these people suggested by archaeological excavation. We know so little about them, and it's the difficulty of estimating the size of the population and the duration of what they were achieving. It's all very vague.

SMITH: Well, let me pose something else that is somewhat of a purposefully naive question. Since much of our data is based on monumental buildings and-- What if we had much more access to the ephemeral arts of ancient America? Do you think that might--? From what you know about basketry and reed work, or sand painting perhaps, feather painting, or unfired ceramic work, would that change? Would we see a much more dynamic culture in the more popular arts?

KUBLER: I don't think so. I think it would remain familiar--of the family. Of the family and over a duration limited by historic, by climatic conditions, by disasters, by-- But the smallness of the aboriginal population of America, of the American hemisphere, is an indication of great discontinuity. Great discontinuity and impermanent achievements. Maya is an exception. The Incas are an exception. The Aztecs are another exception. Zapotecs of Monte Albán are an exception. But those aren't terribly imposing remains.

SMITH: I'm just wondering, accepting your argument-- You present this argument in your classes in the 1970s, after the rise of Chicano nationalism. Might you have students who would say, "No, no, no. You're wrong"?

KUBLER: Yes, of course. Chicano means the glorious Aztec. That's the significance of Chicano to the Chicano. The glory of the Aztecs.

SMITH: Aztlán, yes.

KUBLER: Aztlán. And it's part of their need.

SMITH: I mean, what you're saying is highly charged with emotional meaning.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: And also for a Native American. A Native American activist might get upset about what are the implications for not only the Mesoamerican, but for the North American

populations.

KUBLER: Well, that's the historian. The historian speaks, not the patriot or the racially offended person.

SMITH: Part of what the Chicano activists and the American Indian activists are saying is that from now on, only Mexicans can do Mexican history, only Indians can do Native American history.

KUBLER: Until they become more historical. If they wish to remain tribalists and nationalists, let them do so, but not confuse it with history. And they are the racists.

SMITH: Or racialists.

KUBLER: The racialists. That's the difference. They are the racialists.

SMITH: It is a very highly charged subject.

KUBLER: Very charged, very charged.

SMITH: Some of the things that you've said have made me uncomfortable.

KUBLER: I tried to avoid it in the books.

SMITH: You've tried to avoid it in the books. Because it would simply lead to fruitless debate?

KUBLER: Yes. And it would also blind people to the beauty of some of what was being shown them.

SMITH: Blind which people?

KUBLER: The readers.

SMITH: I mean, blind the Chicanos or--?

KUBLER: No. The readers.

SMITH: European-Americans.

KUBLER: As an historian, and an art historian, I was concerned to show the quality of this, of all of this. And everything that's in the book is of quality, high quality. Now, that's not an anthropological concept at all. [laughter]

SMITH: I think it can be incorporated, but-- Can't sometimes something be aesthetically significant but not be of high quality? Because of the influence it's had.

KUBLER: Of course.

SMITH: I mean, could not a prime object be of secondary value in terms of quality?

KUBLER: Of course.

SMITH: Well, there are some art historians who would say, "No. Absolutely not." What about--? Going on about these controversies and the people you've offended with these statements-- In 1970 there was the archaeology conference at the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York on the iconography of Middle American sculpture.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: And here there was articulated opposition to what you had to say.

KUBLER: That is right. And they were all anthropologists. [laughter] I was the only art

historian.

SMITH: Well, perhaps we should begin to move into this question of art historian versus the anthropology gang. Were you invited to participate in this conference in order to be set upon?

KUBLER: I think so. [laughter] In order to be set upon by the anthropologists.

SMITH: Now, who invited you? Do you recall?

KUBLER: Oh, it was the committee, and it was a very distinguished group. Gordon Willey was one of them, and so on. People of that quality. The best.

SMITH: I think one of the things that came out of that debate was your emphasizing the importance of detecting the critical and evaluative work that's-- The act in each work. That is, every time a work is created, there's a criticism and an evaluation of that artistic tradition taking place. And that should be the goal for the art historian.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: Whereas it's not clear whether that is a goal for the anthropologist.

KUBLER: It is possible to apply in ancient America.

SMITH: Where do you feel that that goal has been most successfully and satisfactorily accomplished? The goal of detecting the critical and evaluative act in an individual

work in the ancient American context. Where have you been able to look at the work and without written resources still be able to a certain degree speculate, but to create an argument about that artist's relationship to his or her society and tradition?

KUBLER: With the archaeological knowledge we have, it can be done anywhere at any moment.

SMITH: But where has it been done most successfully? In terms of your own work, where have you felt most pleased, most satisfied with your ability to do that?

KUBLER: Well, in Maya studies, Peruvian studies, southwestern studies--wherever there's a lot of interesting work. [laughter] And as a matter of fact, everywhere. Everywhere.

SMITH: Well, this is a somewhat unfair question, perhaps. I'm asking you to look at your past work and say, "Aha, when I analyzed this or this building, or this stele vase, that was a particularly fine analysis. That came the closest to my ideal of what I should be doing."

KUBLER: I think of it more in terms of books and articles. Each book and each article was written with this qualitative concept in mind and with foreknowledge of the limitations of the American material.

SMITH: I understand that. I assume that all of your work moves within that, so--

KUBLER: I always soft-pedal the qualitative argument when it's in the American case because it's such a different situation than the European.

SMITH: The gist of my question was to see if you could pinpoint in your own work what you feel most-- I mean, we have our goals and we achieve them to the degree that we achieve them, but we never achieve them one hundred percent. If we did, then we wouldn't-- We'd stop doing our work. But where in your work have you felt that you came closest to achieving the goals that motivate your work?

KUBLER: Well, it was always-- Every article was written for a different purpose, and every book is written for a different purpose. So each book has its purpose and each article has its purpose, and very often the purpose is to arouse debate. Or by means of arousing debate, to open the eyes of the reader to the qualities that have been discussed. Art history is a qualitative operation, a defense of quality wherever it's found.

SMITH: A defense of quality?

KUBLER: A conception of quality wherever it is. Finding out how to find it. [laughter] Having sufficient familiarity to find quality. Familiarity with collections through visiting them, teaching them. To have a sense of the quality that makes it worth talking about.

SMITH: I assume all of this runs through all of your work. I guess what I'm asking is, does some of your work more fully realize those goals? Is there an article or a book or a section of a book that in your own personal view has come closest to realizing these goals?

KUBLER: Oh, no, I can't distinguish among them in that way.

SMITH: You don't have any favorite children.

KUBLER: No. I don't have-- I think they all could be better than they are.

SMITH: Well, that probably-- [laughter]

KUBLER: And that I say without false modesty.

SMITH: Okay. Let's talk somewhat about the Tikal project, which was not a successful project, evidently. Did that grow out of your studies in classic Maya iconography? Was that going to be the next logical step?

KUBLER: Yes, and it-- I've forgotten how the invitation to organize a group of art historians to do this came about, but I think it was the work of Michael Coe's brother.

SMITH: Oh, William Coe.

KUBLER: William Coe. It was his initiative, if I remember. Yes. I organized a group of students to work on it, and they worked on it for several years. Then the Tikal project refused to publish the essays that had been

written. They still haven't been published. It just collapsed.

SMITH: Now, you were invited to work on this from an explicitly art historical--

KUBLER: I was invited to direct this with a group of students. An art historical study of Maya art. Flora [S.] Clancy was one of them. There were six or seven.

SMITH: Let me go through some of the names of people who were involved. Nicholas [M.] Hellmuth?

KUBLER: Nicholas Hellmuth. Yes, he's still in the field.

SMITH: It sounds like he was to focus on the iconography of Tikal glyphs.

KUBLER: Yes. I don't think he ever produced anything.

SMITH: Michael [E.] Kampen?

KUBLER: Kampen. He became interested in east coast archaeology.

SMITH: Maya in Quintana Roo?

KUBLER: In a Maya context, yes.

SMITH: I know he was supposed to work on Tikal graffiti.

KUBLER: Graffiti, yes. Part of that was actually published. He got that published, yes, elsewhere. But the Tikal project would refuse to release the photographs that were necessary for someone like Kampen to publish, and I don't know how Kampen got the photographs out of the Tikal project.

SMITH: Arthur G. Miller?

KUBLER: Arthur Miller has had a very bright career and is now working very hard in Oaxaca. But his Maya study was never published by the Tikal project. You see--

SMITH: He was working on mural painting, I understand.

KUBLER: That's right.

SMITH: And then-- Let's see. Clemency Coggins.

KUBLER: Clemency Coggins is at the Peabody Museum [of Archaeology and Ethnology], Harvard [University]. An illustrious figure she is. Among Mayanists.

SMITH: She was working on pottery painting.

KUBLER: Her Tikal work that would have been published for this group was never finished.

SMITH: Then one last name, Mary Elizabeth Smith.

KUBLER: Yes. She's at Tulane [University]. She's a professor and very highly regarded. Her work is Mixtec.

SMITH: Mixtec, yes.

KUBLER: And she has-- All of these people have done first-rate work.

SMITH: Now, this was funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities, not by the Tikal project with the University of Pennsylvania.

KUBLER: Well, the Tikal project cast off all responsibility for it and refused to publish any of it.

SMITH: They invited you to participate in this, correct?

KUBLER: They invited me to participate with students, and these were the students.

SMITH: Some of them were junior faculty, though. Weren't Arthur Miller and Kampen--? They were faculty, I thought.

KUBLER: Not at that time. No.

SMITH: No? Oh, okay.

KUBLER: They were graduate students.

SMITH: Now, let me-- I noticed that there were a series of little indicators of trouble to come. In '68 there was some correspondence between you and Olga Puleston, who was with the Tikal project. There seemed to be some discrepancy over how terminology was to be used.

KUBLER: Well, she was not a member of our group, but she-- I've forgotten what the issue was.

SMITH: She indicated that you were using the term "themes" in a way that the University of Pennsylvania team, the Tikal project, preferred to use the word "attributes."

KUBLER: I see.

SMITH: And then you wrote back to her that "attributes" began as a venerable art historical term, with specific context developed in European art, and that it was then applied by archaeologists at the beginning of the century to Maya art. There seemed to be some going back and forth on whether to use the word "motif" or "accessory." What

is the significance to these questions about standardization of vocabulary?

KUBLER: It was just a matter-- I would say, it's of no more consequence than the editorial policy of a magazine, of a journal. Of preferring one usage to another.

SMITH: Was this one of the things that led to problems? The fact that what you were talking about would need some change in vocabulary.

KUBLER: I don't think so. I don't think that was significant, no.

SMITH: Next thing I noticed--it was in 1970--J. Eric Thompson refused to allow you the use of his catalog, saying that, "Any revision would have to be the work of a trained epigrapher such as Christopher Jones or Ian Graham."

KUBLER: Oh, he was quite right.

SMITH: He was right on that, but was he right in not letting you use the catalog, then, for your studies?

KUBLER: Oh, we were using them all the time.

SMITH: I saw a correspondence in your files indicating you couldn't use them. You could not proceed with your work because of--

KUBLER: Well, I wasn't given access to his unpublished files. That's the meaning of that. But we used his book all the time.

SMITH: From the tenor of the letters, it was a serious problem. You could not proceed--

KUBLER: He was cutting us off.

SMITH: Why would he do that?

KUBLER: I don't know.

SMITH: You also noted that Zimmermann had been allowed to use the unpublished catalog at the same time, so there seemed to be an element of--

KUBLER: Whose catalog?

SMITH: Thompson's catalog. Thompson was prohibiting you from using his catalog--

KUBLER: And Zimmermann too.

SMITH: No. He allowed Zimmermann.

KUBLER: Oh, he allowed Zimmermann.

SMITH: So there seemed to be complaints about unfair treatment.

KUBLER: Well, at that time, the team were graduate students.

SMITH: Your team.

KUBLER: Yes. And I think that must have been the reason.

SMITH: Why? That still isn't clear to me.

KUBLER: They weren't his graduate students. [laughter] He had his own stable.

SMITH: There's still something very murky and mysterious about this, but--

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: And then in '76 you get cut loose by Michael Coe entirely. Now, what was Coe's reason for deciding to cut you off from the Tikal project?

KUBLER: It wasn't Michael Coe, it was his brother.

SMITH: Oh, I thought it was Michael Coe.

KUBLER: He was in charge. He was in charge of the Tikal project, not Michael. Michael had nothing to do with the Tikal project.

SMITH: Oh, okay. There seemed to be something in the correspondence, again, that indicated--

KUBLER: No.

SMITH: But at any rate, what was William Coe's motivation?

KUBLER: William Coe. William Coe, for reasons I don't know, decided that we should be cut off from support by the project.

SMITH: What reasons did he give you?

KUBLER: Well, he didn't give any reasons. He just cut it off, and that was that. We hadn't produced very much, and perhaps that was the reason.

SMITH: But then what reason would there be for not allowing you to use the photographs?

KUBLER: To keep us from publishing elsewhere.

SMITH: Elsewhere. What I'm trying to get at, is to what

degree--?

KUBLER: I have an article that I want to publish still that needs some of their photographs and drawings, but-- I don't think it's a bad article. I never published it.

SMITH: Have you requested permission from them for the photographs and drawings?

KUBLER: I think so, and I was told no.

SMITH: What reason did they give?

KUBLER: "Your project was cut off."

SMITH: What I'm trying to puzzle out of this is, to what degree are there genuine intellectual concerns and to what degree are we talking about proprietary interests?

KUBLER: I don't know. I can't tell you. [laughter] I never demanded an explanation.

SMITH: It reminds me, of course, of this recent controversy over the Dead Sea Scrolls. The explanation that the scholars committee gave was they did not want to have any unauthorized interpretations.

KUBLER: Yes. That's coin of the realm. [laughter]

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SMITH: Why should anybody be afraid of somebody else's interpretation? It seems to be outside the bounds of what scholarship is supposed to be about, which is the give and take of ideas.

KUBLER: Well, I think there's also the matter of previous commitments which can be alleged. "We promised this to somebody else."

SMITH: But again, why should anybody be afraid of two people putting forward two different interpretations of the same material? It happens all the time in European art.

KUBLER: A lack of faith in, or trust in, the person you're cutting off or persons. That's the simplest explanation.

SMITH: Is there a legitimate reason in your mind for proprietary interest in academic studies?

KUBLER: We were not expert Mayanists. We were art historians. It was a group of art historians. They were not anthropologists. They were chosen because they were art historians. And that was the encouragement that I received from the then director of the Tikal project. Before Coe.

SMITH: Oh, it was the previous director before Coe--

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: --who invited you. Or who initiated the process.

KUBLER: Yes. Michael's brother at one time favored the project and favored the group. He knew them, and they are all distinguished scholars now. But then they were youngsters.

SMITH: Would you have strengthened your position if you had included more senior art historians on the project?

KUBLER: There weren't any. [laughter]

SMITH: So you were attempting to create senior art historians?

KUBLER: I was dealing with the material I had, hoping to make a little enclave there, art historians among anthropologists.

SMITH: Among anthropologists. I noticed there was a parallel project on the Tikal hieroglyphics and their iconography that was headed by T. Patrick Culbert from the University of Arizona. An anthropologist. Was that a competitive project?

KUBLER: I don't think so. I think he was put in charge.

SMITH: Of your project? I thought they--

KUBLER: Put in charge of their part of that program. In other words, the person with whom we had been dealing, who I think was Michael's brother, turned out not to have the

authority or the steadfastness to finish the project, and so it was turned over to someone else. And this was part of the discrediting of Michael's brother. I don't know the inside story.

SMITH: Were you caught up in this in a sense?

KUBLER: No. I wasn't involved at all.

SMITH: Was your project caught up in the sense that when William Coe was discredited, this project gets--?

KUBLER: It probably got lost.

SMITH: It gets lost. It's part of--

KUBLER: Actually, I submitted my part. I've never been able to publish it because they won't release the photographs. And we can't find the manuscript. But I can reconstitute it from the notes I have.

SMITH: If you could give me personality sketches on some of these people who were in the-- Let's start with T. Patrick Culbert.

KUBLER: I don't know him.

SMITH: What about his work? Do you feel sympathetic to his work?

KUBLER: He's competent. He's competent. He's an anthropologist.

SMITH: Does he have a sense of the iconographical tradition in art history?

KUBLER: I don't know if he has it from art history, but

he has it from Maya studies. For Maya studies.

SMITH: For Maya studies.

KUBLER: I think I would trust the anthropologists with it more than the art historians. The art historians would be a gamble. But these were good art historians.

SMITH: There is a sort of broader question, which is the art historian in the humanistic tradition is more self-consciously making an interpretation which is nothing else but an individual interpretation, a take on something. An anthropologist is more inclined to view him- or herself as uncovering some fundamental truth. Is that a problem in ancient American studies, that interpretations are somehow or other viewed as insufficient?

KUBLER: Yes, I think so. I think so. I think a humanistic interpretation is regarded by anthropologists as hogwash. [laughter]

SMITH: As methodologically unrigorous?

KUBLER: Methodologically useless to the anthropologists.

SMITH: Let me sort of play devil's advocate for a bit. You have, in discussing some art historians, said they were emotional and not sufficiently rigorous and methodologically sound. But are you not, then, in sort of a halfway position? Because the anthropologist--

KUBLER: I don't remember saying this. Where did I say it?

SMITH: In March, when we were discussing. But certainly, I mean, there are some art historians who are--

KUBLER: I was discussing the anthropologist's view of the art historian, no doubt.

SMITH: Well, no, I think you were discussing some other art historians who are of a more essayistic, belles-lettristic persuasion.

KUBLER: Oh, there are a lot of those. Yes.

SMITH: I mean, for instance, not a name that we discussed, but certainly Henry Adams in Mont-Saint-Michel and Chartres is an art historian, but he's not--

KUBLER: He's not in our generation.

SMITH: Yes. He's not rigorous in any sense.

KUBLER: That's almost a century ago. [laughter]

SMITH: Well, we won't call any names about the present. But you were being criticized by the anthropologists for being insufficiently rigorous and methodological. Isn't that really a question of different forms of methodology?

KUBLER: It's a different approach. And they rejected it.

SMITH: It seems to me-- For instance, in your debate with Peter Furst in 1970 over whether the jaguar images were evidence of shamanistic continuations from Paleosiberian culture, it would seem to me as an outsider that you're being more methodologically sound because you're limiting the acceptable terms of the argument.

KUBLER: Yes, it's always dangerous to take a term from one world area and apply it to another without permission, so to speak. Shamanism--there are perfectly good Amerindian words for that concept. Why use the northeast Asian?

SMITH: Because people wish to posit a universal culture, a pre-Ice Age or an inter-Ice Age kind of-- You know, what Joseph Campbell talks about with the bear cult.

KUBLER: Well, one should be very careful with the invention of terms. Much more careful than anthropologists are. [laughter]

SMITH: What about J. Eric Thompson? What kind of person was he?

KUBLER: Eric Thompson was a British gentleman, and he died having recently been knighted. He was a very comfortable fellow, and he did his dictionary of Maya glyphs, which is very useful--being superseded now by other studies. But I never knew him well. I saw him perhaps twice. He was at the Metropolitan Museum.

SMITH: And Peter Furst? What kind of person was he?

KUBLER: Peter Furst was more of a shaman. He was like a shaman. [laughter] A big, burly man. A burly man.

SMITH: That suggests that he was also dramatic in his approach, too.

KUBLER: Yes. A lot of panache.

SMITH: Now, you were mentioning that Michael Coe is here at Yale [University], right?

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: And he frequently sat in on doctoral committees?

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: But you also mentioned early today that this was not always an easy relationship, that there were difficulties.

KUBLER: Oh, yes. [laughter] He has accused me of being uncooperative in a letter that was longer than it needed to be.

SMITH: Uncooperative about what?

KUBLER: Uncooperative. About everything. [laughter] But I took no offense. It was his charge, and I didn't ask him to support it.

SMITH: What initiated this letter? Can you remember any set of circumstances?

KUBLER: I don't know. It came out of the blue. I never knew why he wrote the letter.

SMITH: Uncooperative about how to approach-- The question on the floor is, what was Michael Coe up to?

KUBLER: I don't know. I never have known. Out of a blue sky.

SMITH: What was he like to work with on committees?

KUBLER: Oh, we never had any conflict. He would come to

our department when there was an anthropological side to a dissertation that was being written in the department. It often happened.

SMITH: Would that be pre-Columbian, too?

KUBLER: Pre-Columbian, American, Amerindian.

SMITH: But presumably-- I mean, you are the expert on those materials. You didn't need another person to come in to handle ancient American society or culture.

KUBLER: Well, the department thought that it would be proper, and I agreed. And anthropologists come. So he attended meetings. I think he was newly made chairman, and he felt that I had ignored or-- Yes, ignored invitations to anthropology examinations. Which was, in my opinion, not true, because I had gone to some. But I hadn't gone to all of them, so he gives me, in two pages of typewriting, I'm being uncooperative. I thought that was unwarranted. I never answered, never mentioned it again. It had no consequences.

SMITH: There is a stereotypical image of academics bickering amongst each other over insignificant questions.

KUBLER: Yes. This is one.

SMITH: This is one. You would say this is the case where the stereotype is correct.

KUBLER: I would say this was a one-sided bicker. Not a bickering, because that suggests continuity. [laughter]

SMITH: But one of the more substantive questions in terms of the debates with anthropologists was the question of value versus material culture.

KUBLER: Well, that's the same game we were talking about.

SMITH: But I had a question to you. Isn't all material culture a statement of values? I mean, isn't that a statement that you're making in The Shape of Time:[Remarks on the History of Things (1962)].

KUBLER: Of course it is.

SMITH: But your statement-- The feeling is anthropologists are insufficiently tuned into values. Are they overly concerned about the values and underconcerned about the form?

KUBLER: They are social scientists, and they follow the canons, the prescriptions, and the rule book of the social scientist.

SMITH: There was one thing that you mentioned, which is that useful objects are the objects in a society that change at the slowest rate. I think this was from an essay you wrote in the early 1960s. And therefore, if one wanted to look at the most dynamic aspect of society, the aspect of society where there are concerns about change and debates over direction of change, one looks at art, or I would suppose art and literature, the creative arts.

KUBLER: The arts of expression.

SMITH: Which in ancient America means largely the monuments.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: How does that kind of discrepancy play in this art history versus anthropology argument? Is there a discrepancy between everyday objects and the elite art?

KUBLER: None whatever. They're part of a continuum. But the anthropologists are social scientists, stressing science, objectivity, the suppression of feeling, the suppression of everything that could be regarded as pain or pleasure. Pain or pleasure has nothing to do with it. Aesthetics is about pain and pleasure.

SMITH: So somehow they view social change taking place without--

KUBLER: They are social scientists, and pain and pleasure has nothing to do with it.

SMITH: But how does social change take place without pain or pleasure? Or pain and pleasure?

KUBLER: Well, the behavior of the anthropologist, we're talking about the behavior of the anthropologist. His conditioning as a social scientist gives him that austere rigor about pain and pleasure.

SMITH: I'm thinking now of Durkheim, who is certainly very important in the scheme of things.

KUBLER: Oh, yes.

SMITH: He's very concerned about pain and pleasure.

KUBLER: Oh, of course. He understands art. [laughter]

SMITH: What about Malinowski? How do you feel about Malinowski, Bronislaw Malinowski?

KUBLER: I think less highly of him. I knew him here.

SMITH: Oh, you did. Did you feel that his analyses of South Sea art, Trobriand Island art, were--?

KUBLER: They were scientific.

SMITH: They were scientific, okay.

KUBLER: Scientifically satisfying.

SMITH: Skipping ahead several generations, two generations, are you familiar with the work of Pierre Bourdieu?

KUBLER: Bourdieu?

SMITH: Bourdieu, yes.

KUBLER: I know the name.

SMITH: But he's not-- You have not read him.

KUBLER: No, I haven't read him.

SMITH: Okay.

KUBLER: Tell me about him.

SMITH: Maybe over dinner. One of his anthropological subjects has been aesthetic taste in modern America and Europe.

KUBLER: Well, I ought to know him better.

SMITH: Actually, you should. You should definitely know

him.

KUBLER: Bourdieu.

SMITH: Let me switch-- Well, no, I have one question on this. How much was this debate that you were engaged in understood and appreciated by other art historians?

KUBLER: Debates?

SMITH: Between you and anthropologists.

KUBLER: I never drew them into it. I thought it was infra dig.

SMITH: But yet what you're trying to do is to establish a fundamental importance for and autonomy for an art historical vision in an interdisciplinary situation.

KUBLER: Well, I don't have that kind of time to preach to the unconverted.

SMITH: Preach to the unconverted? Okay. [laughter]

KUBLER: I can teach the converted, but I can't preach to the unconverted.

SMITH: This is a question, a point in fact-- Two things on the Tikal project. Your study was to be issue number 39 of the Tikal Reports?

KUBLER: Yes, that's right.

SMITH: And that did not appear in any form.

KUBLER: Nothing appeared, nothing appeared. My article I thought was satisfactory, but I was sorry that the others were found unsatisfactory. But the truth is that they are

respected scholars now. The names you listed, I had praise for each and every one of them.

SMITH: Yes, you did. What effect has the guerrilla warfare in Guatemala had upon studies, on Maya studies, over the last twenty years?

KUBLER: Well, the main effect is the displacement of the archaeological theater. The archaeological theater is now in Belize, where in effect the oldest manifestations are being found.

SMITH: Would they have been found otherwise?

KUBLER: Probably not.

SMITH: Has anything been destroyed or lost in the course of the civil war in Guatemala?

KUBLER: Less than in the depredations of the commercial exploiters, who are perhaps the same people.

SMITH: Oh. Explain that.

KUBLER: Well, the troops or the armed forces in the field are probably not above making a profit.

SMITH: The government forces?

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: What about the guerrilleros?

KUBLER: Well, they would have to fight the government forces.

SMITH: Yes, but in terms of--

KUBLER: But the government forces can perfectly well

perform excavations on their own, knowing that they can sell them for a vast profit.

SMITH: Has it been dangerous for anthropologists or archaeologists or art historians to do work in Guatemala?

KUBLER: Well, those categories are very much concerned for their own hides. They don't go near it.

SMITH: I presume in a similar way studies in Peru have been cut back in the last few years.

KUBLER: Same thing. The Japanese have been doing very good work in Peru.

SMITH: Really?

KUBLER: They have an open field.

SMITH: You had mentioned when we were driving that the history of art and the history of culture do not relate very well to each other. That struck me as a very peculiar statement, because I think the two subjects, given a certain amount of distinction, are actually very interlocked.

KUBLER: But the mesh. It's a matter of mesh. The mesh of culture is about one of the biggest you can find on the market. Cultural history, that lets everything through, or catches nothing. But the history of art is much finer mesh. Much smaller operation.

SMITH: Well, how would you define culture?

KUBLER: The behavior of everybody for awfully long

periods of time.

SMITH: Could you discuss somewhat about your class lecture notes, the style that you developed them in and your method of presentation? How did you prepare for your lectures, in other words?

KUBLER: I wrote an outline. I always wrote an outline.

SMITH: You would never write out a verbatim text.

KUBLER: Oh, no. No. Only for public lectures. Public lectures have a blessing that nobody can speak before invited to. But students will speak, and should speak. I much prefer talking to students.

SMITH: Would you allow your lectures to be interrupted with questions?

KUBLER: All the time.

SMITH: All the time?

KUBLER: All the time. They weren't lectures. They were what the French call causeries, causerie about a stated subject.

SMITH: So you would go through your outline and ad lib, as it were, on the topics.

KUBLER: Yes. I want to be sure these points leave plenty of time for talk.

SMITH: And these are for your lecture courses?

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: Now, how many students would be in the lecture

courses?

KUBLER: Oh, well, I thought you were talking about seminars.

SMITH: No, the lecture courses.

KUBLER: The lecture courses. Oh, at the most-- Well, it depends. When I was beginning, it was two hundred.

SMITH: These would be the survey courses.

KUBLER: The older I got, the fewer students I had to lecture to. The number diminished to seminar size.

SMITH: How often would you revise your lecture notes?

KUBLER: Every time I read them.

SMITH: So you might add a book or delete a book or--

KUBLER: Oh, yes. I might write another lecture about a book that I did want them to read.

SMITH: How many books and articles would you normally assign to an undergraduate to read in a course? What would be the typical reading load?

KUBLER: Oh, there would be a general handbook for the whole field and nothing else. The moment the student knew his choice or her choice, she was free to go ahead. Then it was up to her or him.

SMITH: And this would apply obviously as well to the graduate courses, that reading was more self-directed.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: But again, was there any kind of university-wide

concern about how much reading or the work load that might be involved in a class? So that students taking four units--or whatever the standard would be, five units--would be doing a similar amount of work as they might be doing in another course.

KUBLER: The only criterion as far as I could find out was-- The only criterion was whether the students were complaining. If the students were complaining, it got to the department.

SMITH: Did they ever complain to you about having too much work to do?

KUBLER: No.

SMITH: No. Okay.

KUBLER: No. I don't remember any student complaints. But I sat on committees where there were student complaints to be dealt with.

SMITH: How frequently were the student complaints valid?

KUBLER: When there was an incompetent person or offensive person.

SMITH: These would have to do with more one-on-one interaction.

KUBLER: It was very rare.

SMITH: What about the use of film in art classes? Did you use film?

KUBLER: Almost never. So hard to get to be relevant at

that time.

SMITH: Were there good films on ancient American or Iberian?

KUBLER: They were just beginning to be made.

SMITH: How do you feel generally about the use of films? Would they be valuable to the kind of point you're trying to make?

KUBLER: I think probably they should be shown for pleasure. For pleasure, in order to warm the course up, and then forget the film.

SMITH: Or if you have to go out of town for a meeting or something.

KUBLER: Just warm the course up a bit. And put in a bit of amusement.

SMITH: Let's say, could a film of Chichén Itzá give you a better feel of that--? Do you know of any films that give you a better feel of monuments, ancient American monuments, than simply looking at good photographs?

KUBLER: Every film is better than a good photograph.

SMITH: Oh, really.

KUBLER: Every film, no matter how poorly it's made, is better than a still photograph. Something's in motion. The camera is in motion.

SMITH: Usually, yeah. This is a difficult question, but how do you train students to think visually in a highly

verbal environment such as a university?

KUBLER: Well, we do it with slides. The steady image, not the moving image. And the illustrations in their textbooks. And the occasional visits to the museum and looking at the objects. But then they're always in motion. [laughter] They're not looking.

SMITH: The German method is terribly tedious kinds of exercises like counting the folds. When we interviewed Craig Hugh Smyth, he complained that when he was in school he hadn't realize how dreary art history could be, because of these exercises. Do you find those kinds of things useful? Counting folds or fenestration or loops.

KUBLER: For myself yes, but for others no.

SMITH: Why for yourself?

KUBLER: Well, because sometimes it makes possible a distinction.

SMITH: Ah.

KUBLER: This is not the same as that.

SMITH: Did you find that students were becoming more visual as the century progressed? I mean, Marshall McLuhan in the early sixties talked about our moving from a literate society to a media society. Did you find any evidence of increasing visual literacy on the part of students?

KUBLER: Only among the ones who were capable of becoming

more civilized, [laughter] who were the good ones. But then they were doing many other things, too.

SMITH: I'd like to talk briefly, change the topic completely. Your involvement with the Comité International de l'Histoire de l'Art in the sixties. You mentioned that you were actually quite active in that for twenty years, and it seemed in the sixties you sat on the committee on administration and supervised the revision of its constitution.

KUBLER: As I remember, we never did anything.

SMITH: Well, there's certainly a lot of paper generated for not doing anything. [laughter]

KUBLER: A lot of paper generated, yes. I think these international societies, many of them are of this character.

SMITH: Let me point out a couple of issues that seem to jump out of this mass of papers. One was there seemed to be a problematic relationship to anthropologists, archaeologists, and orientalists. Some wanted to expand the organization so that it would include those, and others wanted to limit it so it would remain the traditional European fine arts. Do you remember those discussions?

KUBLER: I remember that kind of discussion, yes. Opening or closing. And the--

SMITH: I mean, to you is there any significance to the issue?

KUBLER: Well, it seemed reasonable to open the society to more people of supposedly common interest.

SMITH: What were the opponents afraid of?

KUBLER: Losing control of the funds.

SMITH: Oh, okay. [laughter]

KUBLER: The funds are considerable. They're generally government subsidies to learned societies.

SMITH: Let me throw out some names of people who were involved when you were involved. Millard Meiss.

KUBLER: Oh, yes, I knew him well. A very good scholar and a very generous person and admirable in every way.

SMITH: How well did he function in this kind of international environment?

KUBLER: Very well, very well. He was careful about what he accepted to do, and then when he had accepted, he did it.

SMITH: How about Hans [R.] Hahnloser?

KUBLER: Hahnloser I didn't know so well. I knew him at meetings. He's a medievalist too, I think.

SMITH: I guess he was executive secretary or secretary-treasurer of the organization.

KUBLER: Yes. I remember him with no displeasure.

SMITH: André Chastel.

KUBLER: André Chastel was a person of importance. And you knew it. [laughter]

SMITH: Did he--?

KUBLER: He was important.

SMITH: He was important scholastically, but also because he had the French government behind him.

KUBLER: He always kept his foot in the trough.

SMITH: So were there particular positions that he would take, or were there aspects of his--?

KUBLER: Well, he was always on the governing board of the association. He died recently.

SMITH: Yes, he did.

KUBLER: But he was a French aristo.

SMITH: What about Giulio Carlo Argan? Do you remember his involvement?

KUBLER: Argan? Yes, I remember him. He was more of a politician.

SMITH: Now, what do you mean by that?

KUBLER: Well, he was Italian, I think.

SMITH: Yes.

KUBLER: And he worked the political strings in Italy. He was based in Rome, and he had his finger in everything.

SMITH: Are there people in the U.S. that are comparable to Argan or Chastel in terms of their ability to--?

KUBLER: Probably, yes. And their gift for

administration.

SMITH: But Argan is also considered a scholar of considerable stature.

KUBLER: Yes, but-- Well, Argan-- No, I won't grant stature. [laughter]

SMITH: And a theoretician as well.

KUBLER: And a theoretician.

SMITH: What about Anthony Blunt?

KUBLER: Well, there's another politically damaged case.

SMITH: Yes, well--

KUBLER: A bad political judgment finally killed him.

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SMITH: You were saying about the Tikal project.

KUBLER: The Tikal project underwent a change of direction owing to the decisions taken in Philadelphia at the [University of Pennsylvania] University Museum.

SMITH: So a new person came on to direct it?

KUBLER: A new person came on to direct it, and the work for the Yale [University] group was arrested. It was stopped.

SMITH: It was stopped.

KUBLER: To other choices.

SMITH: On the Tikal project, after your group was dismissed from this, have any other art historians participated--?

KUBLER: None.

SMITH: None. On any form of Mesoamerican research?

KUBLER: Not that I know of. Not the Tikal project. The Tikal project reverted to the archaeologists.

SMITH: Well, let's get back to the question of the Comité International [de l'Histoire de l'Art]. You had mentioned last night after our taping session that you felt a certain degree of dubiousness about the value of such organizations.

KUBLER: Yes, for the committee members who are invited to come at the Comité expense and-- The members' own contribution, or some part of it-- It seemed it was a parade and a charade. There was no real work to do. There was no real responsibility taken. One was asked for no contribution to the proceedings, and it was all in the hands of the regular committees. These foreign visitors were foreign visitors, and nothing was expected of them and they came unprepared.

SMITH: Though you were, for several years, chair of the committee on administration for the Comité International. How did you get to that position? How did that happen?

KUBLER: I was elected. And I attended when I went to the annual meeting, and all the work had already been done. There was nothing, and there were no decisions taken. All the decisions had already been taken in other committee meetings prior to the arrival of the foreigners, the foreign members. The foreign members were, I'm sure, for dressing. Window dressing.

SMITH: There did seem to be some disputes, or some problems, over the direction of the Répertoire d'Art et d'Archéologie, the nature of the journal and the direction it should go in, how expansive it should be. Did you have any participation in these discussions?

KUBLER: Not really. We were told what had been decided.

SMITH: Did you have any opinions at that time?

KUBLER: No questions had been submitted.

SMITH: Another issue that you seem to have been involved in was the Comité International protested to the Vatican its decision to ship Michelangelo's Pietà to the United States for this tour.

KUBLER: I don't remember that, but that would have been an announcement, not a decision. And not a discussion of the decision.

SMITH: Another thing, there was a letter from Millard Meiss to you in 1961, and this was when you were discussing revising the bylaws and constitution of the organization of the Comité, changing it to a société. You described yesterday that nothing really came of all that effort. But he said at this point, and I found this curious--

KUBLER: Millard Meiss.

SMITH: Millard Meiss said that he did not believe that art history was strong enough as a discipline to stand on its own. It needed support wherever it could find it. Is that a common feeling among art historians? That they were somewhat on the periphery of the humanities?

KUBLER: I think so. I think that was generally shared. We had our own organization, the College Art Association, and it functioned according to the needs that arose in the

profession. It also included artists. It always included the practicing artists.

SMITH: What about the function of a society like the Comité International in terms of creating a common language for art historians? Did it work towards that? When you bring together Americans, Britons, Germans, Italians, and the French, you are each working in very different national traditions.

KUBLER: These were ceremonial parades. [laughter] They were not working sessions. We were not invited to comment on the issues that were before the working committees.

SMITH: So at these congresses that happen every four years, there would not really be debate?

KUBLER: No, there was no debate. It was a parade. A parade of visitors.

SMITH: [to Reese] Do you have any questions on the Comité?

REESE: Well, I was not here yesterday, so the question I would ask is, who were the real powers behind the Comité?

KUBLER: People like André Chastel. André Chastel was for years the central figure and probably maybe still is.

REESE: And so it was really out of France that the power and organization of the Comité came.

KUBLER: That's right. The international aspect was a window dressing.

REESE: Did you discuss yesterday the 1973 congress in Granada, where there was a major attempt to open the field to the New World?

KUBLER: No.

REESE: Could you say something about your efforts in bringing about that conference in Granada? "Plus Ultra."

KUBLER: I remember participating in a discussion of the motto. I remember being told what the French wished to accomplish with this. The next advice I received was to be in Granada. And I was there.

SMITH: Did you recruit Latin American art historians to come? Did you help form national committees?

KUBLER: Wasn't asked to. I was never asked to do anything.

REESE: I remember that as we prepared the collected essays, you sent me a letter which was a protest of the compass of the Comité. Because it went from Constantine until-- I can't remember the cutoff.

KUBLER: The definition of the Middle Ages.

REESE: But then it was European. It really did not include any of the world outside of Europe. I have this memory of a letter of protest on your part. Do you remember any of the--?

KUBLER: I can look for such a letter. I don't remember it--which is what I have done with the meetings I

attended. I sort of wiped them out as being of any significance as far as our international participation was concerned.

SMITH: Are there colloquia that were productive that you've participated in? Provided a model of--

KUBLER: There may be, but I have not been invited to any.

SMITH: Not necessarily under the auspices of this particular international, but were the _mesas_ _redondas_ productive meetings? The _mesas_ _redondas_ in Mexico.

KUBLER: I think more or less the same ceremonious aspect of-- The ceremony of having foreign visitors and having them participating. Being there, but not in any of the decisions.

SMITH: What about a meeting such as we discussed yesterday a little bit, the 1970 conference at the Metropolitan Museum [of Art] on Mesoamerican archaeology?

KUBLER: That was a round table. That was a round table with a specific program. Those were papers.

SMITH: Are those kinds of activities productive, do you find?

KUBLER: I think that one was, yes. I think that would have been, yes.

SMITH: Does that kind of interchange sharpen your thinking?

KUBLER: That would have been an interchange of finished

work that had been commissioned and approved, or approved and commissioned, and reading of the papers and discussion.

SMITH: Last night when we were at dinner, you mentioned--this is, I think, a quote--"God forbid that I ever become a *chef d'école*." [laughter] I was wondering if you could reflect on how you define a *chef d'école* and why you wouldn't want to be one.

KUBLER: In the French sense, it means a great deal of authority. We don't have such *chefs d'école*. We have changing committees, changing chairmen. We don't have heads of societies that are installed for life. That is the case with [André] Chastel, if I understand his position right.

REESE: Do you have any insights into what were the conditions that in fact produced André Chastel at a specific moment in time? Not intellectual formation as much as the ability to seize upon the opportunity to organize international art history.

KUBLER: I know nothing in detail of how Chastel gained his position. But his position was one of great authority in the affairs of the Comité.

SMITH: With that authority-- I mean, to play the devil's advocate, that kind of authority allows you to develop students and junior faculty that are pursuing the sorts of

questions that interest you, so in a sense you can perpetuate a vision--

KUBLER: Yes, build a team.

SMITH: --of artistry.

KUBLER: You build teams, yes.

SMITH: Have you been concerned with developing a continuity, a spiritual progeny, people who will carry on the questions that have been concerning you and--?

KUBLER: Well, of course in the routine of teaching, that is unavoidable. And I never made political causes with the results of that activity. I never benefited from political exploitation of having been in authority as an instructor. I always paid attention to the work in hand, but I never-- Accepting-- When it was my turn, assumed the chairmanship, I did. Or the director of graduate studies, I did.

SMITH: Those were fairly early on in your career, it seems to me.

KUBLER: Yes, and then they stretched on for a number of years. Then I was through, and it was someone else's turn.

SMITH: So you feel no burning need to establish an institutional legacy.

KUBLER: No. An institutional legacy, no. The only step I've taken in that direction is to donate my books to the

university, my professional books.

SMITH: In terms of pre-Columbian or ancient American faculty at Yale, did you have a decisive voice on who was hired? For instance, Mary Miller, was that--?

KUBLER: In that case, yes. But I was never consulted on an anthropological appointment, and with reason.

SMITH: Yes. But within the art history department--

KUBLER: Only in the art history department.

REESE: I wonder, if we can return not to the Comité per se, but to Europe's attitude towards America-- I mean, we've discussed a good bit, you know, the problem of representing the parts south to Americans. But do you have just any general feelings about the development of American studies in Europe and whether the Americans were way ahead of the Europeans or whether it was developing at the same time?

KUBLER: Well, I read about them in certain journals. For example, the Belgians. The Belgians are very much interested in what is going on in America, and so are the Dutch. There's a journal which records work of interest to both sides of the Atlantic. But that's an unusual case.

SMITH: One other question on the Comité, which is-- I noticed that one of the people you worked with was Lorentz, Stanislaw Lorentz from the University of Warsaw.

What kind of--?

KUBLER: I remember the name.

SMITH: Can you give any kind of personality sketch of him and the role he played in this committee that you were chair of?

KUBLER: I don't remember him as active, excepting to be there. Being there was--

SMITH: What about the Comité as a platform for building bridges between the communist bloc and the North Atlantic countries? Did that kind of activity develop?

KUBLER: I wasn't aware of it being pushed in that direction. I don't think Chastel, who was very conservative in politics, I believe-- I don't believe Chastel would have done that. Chastel was a power in the Comité.

REESE: It was really a series of diplomatic alliances, I believe, and most of the members were in fact appointed for life and could name their own successors.

KUBLER: It was a very small committee, yes.

REESE: And they were in some ways, I believe, self-perpetuating. I only know secondhand from later moments, where there has been an attempt to get a structure that is more mobile and will turn over more quickly and where elected representatives would enter. But I don't think this same early structure has remained in place.

KUBLER: That's my impression too.

SMITH: Well, I think enough on that.

KUBLER: Yes. Foreign participation was ceremonial.

SMITH: So when did you pull out of active participation on the Comité International?

KUBLER: Well, I gave up accepting invitations to annual meetings.

SMITH: Would that be in the sixties?

KUBLER: And I don't know what my status is.

SMITH: You were the chair of a committee within the Comité.

KUBLER: I don't remember. I don't remember doing any business with that committee. It existed in their records, but I don't remember attending a meeting of its members.

SMITH: You did attend a meeting in Barcelona in 1962.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: And you had a meeting in New York City which was in conjunction with the international meeting.

KUBLER: Yes, but this was always ceremonial because it was-- The hosts were French.

REESE: Did you have a sense of an intellectual relationship with Chastel through [Henri] Focillon?

KUBLER: Not really. I never knew him well.

SMITH: See, actually Marcel Aubert was the power in the

Comité until 1960, and then Chastel takes his place.

KUBLER: I didn't know that. I thought he had been in place before '60.

SMITH: I got that out of going through your two thick folders on this, and there was a record there of the transition of power of Aubert to Chastel.

KUBLER: I think it's a-- There's more behind these shifts of names than appears.

SMITH: In what sense?

KUBLER: Someone is really in power who is not mentioned. [laughter]

SMITH: Oh. Okay. Let's put that aside and shift back to your--

KUBLER: And I don't know who that was at the time of the [inaudible] between Aubert and Chastel. Aubert would have been a very old party at this time.

SMITH: Well, wouldn't Millard Meiss have been a power to reckon with? Would he have been someone comparable to Chastel in terms of--?

KUBLER: Yes. But I don't think he was consulted very much. I was not aware that he was part of the inner circle.

SMITH: In American terms, would he have been comparable to Chastel in terms of the influence that he wielded and his ability to manipulate funding sources?

KUBLER: Similar. Similar. Yes. Millard Meiss was a man of some wealth also, like Chastel.

REESE: Could you say something about what changes have occurred, let's say, in the development of French art history that would in many ways explain the differences between the country that produced a Focillon and much of the tenor of, let's say, postwar art history in France? Focillon's legacy in France. Yale had picked up an American legacy of Focillon. In some way I'm thinking about what happened after the war. Was there a Focillon legacy in France? Or was it totally transplanted?

KUBLER: Focillon died in exile. His memory was revered, but I don't think there were any political consequences. There was no suggestion of a successor to him. He was at the Collège de France, and his chair was occupied by somebody else and that was the end of it. But he had no political life, really. No significant political life. He participated in politics, French politics, but not in the trenches, so to speak. In the trenches of administration.

SMITH: Can someone be an administrator and a scholar at the same time, in your opinion? Is it possible to combine the kind of political perspective and--?

KUBLER: Some do, some do. Some have. It's a decision that isn't offered to many. [laughter]

SMITH: Well, I'm wondering if perhaps, in your opinion, there are distinct modes of thinking involved in the-- An academic administrator and a researcher may be in opposition to each other.

KUBLER: Well, some administrators have been research scholars.

SMITH: Of note?

KUBLER: I think so. I think so. Assuming responsibility as a matter of conscience or as a matter of ambition, as the case might be. Unfulfilled ambition.

SMITH: The other faculty at Yale: Were you involved in the recruiting of Arthur [G.] Miller to the junior faculty position?

KUBLER: Yes. He was appointed while I was there.

SMITH: Did you play a leading role in getting him onto the faculty?

KUBLER: Well, he was known as a graduate student, and his work was approved and there was no trouble.

SMITH: What about Michael [E.] Kampen, who also joined the Yale faculty?

KUBLER: Michael Kampen was less clearly a candidate for a teaching post, and I don't think he ever had one.

SMITH: Oh, I thought he did actually, but--

KUBLER: He might have had an active instructorship, but it had no future. No future was intended by that

appointment.

SMITH: Now, when Miller joins the Yale Department of Art History--

KUBLER: Mary Miller.

SMITH: Mary Miller, and then Arthur Miller-- Are they related in any way?

KUBLER: No.

SMITH: The two Millers join the history of art faculty. Does that relieve you of some of your teaching responsibilities vis-à-vis ancient America?

KUBLER: No. They teach too. They teach too. They do more of the undergraduate teaching and leave part of the graduate work in my hands.

SMITH: I was wondering, because in the 1970s your major books begin to shift back to Iberian subjects. We discussed yesterday the difficulties that you seemed to be having with doing Mesoamerican work, just in terms of the practical difficulties of the Tikal project and the hostilities that were generated in Mexico with the authorities.

KUBLER: We were told to turn it off. [laughter]

SMITH: What I'm getting at is, to what degree were these external difficulties shifting your field of attention away from ancient America to Iberian topics?

KUBLER: Well, I'd always had concern with Spanish topics,

and when this change in the responsibility towards the Tikal project occurred, I was very glad to resume Spanish studies. I spent a good deal of time on it.

SMITH: So in the seventies, did your seminars shift from ancient American topics to Spanish and Portuguese topics?

KUBLER: To some extent, yes.

SMITH: To some extent.

KUBLER: I had a seminar going with people who wanted Iberian topics.

SMITH: Now, in 1972 you published Portuguese Plain Architecture: [Between Spices and Diamonds, 1521-1706]. When did you start working on that book, do you recall?

KUBLER: It was in the sixties.

SMITH: Early? Mid? Late?

KUBLER: I think mid. Mid-sixties. It's very easy to read Portuguese if one knows Spanish. It's very difficult to speak Portuguese if one speaks Spanish. Many Spanish people cannot understand Portuguese people. Portuguese people can always understand Spaniards. Odd arrangement. An odd condition. But the language, Portuguese is phonetically much more like French. The sounds of Portuguese are nasal, as in much French.

SMITH: How did your research--? I mean, you spent really a decade of intensive research on pre-Columbian topics, on Teotihuacán, the Maya iconography.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: How did the work that you did on those topics help in your study of Portuguese architecture?

KUBLER: They were entirely separate. Entirely separate.

SMITH: There were no solutions to problems that you made?

KUBLER: They were different trains that I took.

[laughter]

SMITH: But there were no conceptual solutions that you found in studying ancient American art that allowed you to unlock problems in Portuguese baroque architecture?

KUBLER: There may have been a connection in the underlying approach to the work, but really they were separate trains I was taking. Getting off one and getting on the other.

SMITH: Well, let's go to the book in particular. I'm going to ask, as we did with the Teotihuacán work, if you could, in your memory, your recollection, pose the problem that interested you when you began working on the book. This is distinct from the problem that ultimately the book is about, but what was the problem that hooked you to start working on a subject?

KUBLER: Well, in the Portuguese case, it was apparent to me that only the highly ornate side of Portuguese expression had been discussed or had achieved expression for people wanting to know more about the Portuguese art.

So I decided to write on the plain style, which is a translation from the estilo chão. Chão. So I worked for some years on that book and selected the examples. The book finally came out, and it now exists in Portuguese, too. The only serious criticism of it that I remember is that some of the examples are not plain style. They're not estilo chão.

SMITH: What was it about the estilo chão that intrigued you? What was the problem involved?

KUBLER: Well, probably it was related to my interest in New Mexico and the plainness, the simplicity, the elegance of working in adobe. I found a recurrence of that aesthetic in Portugal, which was partly owing to financial crises, but those financial crises allowed this expression.

SMITH: Now, the method that you developed seemed to me quite similar. The typology and sequencing of groups of buildings is similar to what you used in Mexican Architecture of the Sixteenth Century [1948]. But it was an evolution or a development from that.

KUBLER: Most books are highly selective. Most books were highly selective, in the first case being of the sixteenth century, and of mendicant origin mostly. And in the Portuguese case, it's also highly selective. To pick out only the plain architecture.

SMITH: To your recollection, how did your typological analysis change from the 1940s to the 1970s? Had you developed more sophisticated ways of approaching it?

KUBLER: I had different ways of approaching New Mexico and Portugal. I had different ways. They were not the same.

SMITH: And where did these ways come from? What suggested these ways?

KUBLER: Partly the prior literature on Portuguese architecture and the relationship to contemporary architecture, which is also present in the case of New Mexico.

REESE: To what extent was the plain-style book charted in advance as to the kind of problems that you would deal with, as opposed to growing in the more organic way out of the research you were doing?

KUBLER: Well, it grew out of the material, out of the buildings that I knew of and which I had visited and seen. I included perhaps too many ornate buildings for a rigidly selected group of plain monuments, of plain-style monuments. The book was criticized for that, that there were-- It overflowed from plainness into the abandoned ornateness.

SMITH: I was rereading your description of Focillon's lecture style, in which you talked about a technique that

you developed also. Rather than try to cover everything, you built an architecture, you built a building, an edifice, out of a few samples, which you studied in much greater detail. So that in fact it was all part of the same project, but each of these--right?--allowed you a different kind of access to the problem. In the case of many of the books you'd written in the preceding decade, because they were surveys, there was not as much liberty, because you had to cover, by virtue of the assignment, a broad ground. But this was a liberty, a book with more liberty.

KUBLER: Yes. The Pelican History of Art [series] had its program, and one followed the program. But these I was freer in.

REESE: So what I was trying to recapture was, in some way, that new liberty. And yet a book that is covering a problem, plain style, with chapters that are not all cut out of the same mold. I mean, the _joyeuses entrées_. Each one of these is both separate and yet builds into the total. I was thinking about the process of how you came to those particular subjects, whether you sat and wrote an outline in advance and said, "These would be interesting subjects" or whether or not you had already worked on pieces of it before that you build into this larger whole.

KUBLER: I think the latter is the case, that the need for

fashioning certain pieces of this structure was apparent during thinking it out. So it's a process of selection and what not to say and how far to go in one direction. I went a little too far in the opinion of some.

SMITH: One of the criticisms was your rejection of the Italian model. Which was an innovation on your part, challenging the idea that Italian architects had been the source for Portuguese architecture.

KUBLER: I think this was a case of domestic habits already present in Portugal allowing for a very bare and not overcharged ornamental style, a much simpler structure and ornament, corresponding to the impoverishment of the state.

SMITH: How would you define the difference of your approach from that of Carlos de Azevedo?

KUBLER: Carlos de Azevedo is a musician. He really is a musician. [laughter]

SMITH: Oh.

KUBLER: More than an art historian.

SMITH: I'm not sure how to follow up on that. [laughter] What about Ayres de Carvalho?

KUBLER: Ayres de Carvalho. I didn't know him very well.

SMITH: But his work, what about his work?

KUBLER: His written work?

SMITH: Yes.

KUBLER: I used what he'd done, of course. I think we're about the same age.

SMITH: José-Augusto França?

KUBLER: França is more of a critic than a historian of painting. He's very active in that Coloquio journal, the art journal that appears every few months. He's very central to that.

SMITH: Reynaldo dos Santos?

KUBLER: Reynaldo dos Santos is of Focillon's generation and a polymath like Henri Focillon.

SMITH: Did any of these people have ideas that were really pertinent to you, that you would incorporate?

KUBLER: I almost certainly did. [laughter] One can't build it all of stones one has quarried himself.

SMITH: Well, perhaps we should pursue that a little further, the relationship of the scholar to his predecessors.

KUBLER: Yes.

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SMITH: We take the metaphor of scholarship as an ongoing dialogue across the centuries, basically. How much should one, how much does one, rely upon the work of other scholars?

KUBLER: As much as one needs. [laughter] One has to need help or fashion it differently.

SMITH: What about originality? What is the role for originality in contemporary scholarship?

KUBLER: Originality of idea perhaps is the primary requirement. "Is the idea worth working?"

SMITH: Well, when you talk about taking the building blocks from these other scholars, what does that mean precisely? When you accept aspects of their research, their descriptions, what do you do then? What do you do that to your own satisfaction advances their work?

KUBLER: Building out a more complete view of the grouping that seems significant and ill attended in the work of predecessors. Plain style had really not occurred to the Portuguese, or to anyone anywhere else. The plain style could be taken seriously. Estilo chão. That was a novelty.

SMITH: Are we dealing with a form of vernacular

architecture?

KUBLER: It is. It is that. It is that, a vernacular of considerable power.

REESE: Richard asked the question about scholarship as a dialogue, a communication of the scholars. Is that its primary function for you, or is it a much more solitary--?

KUBLER: Well, reading the work of a contemporary is a form of dialogue. The contemporary has had his say, or her say, and one has it and one-- Writing is part of the dialogue with the reading. Sometimes one has the good luck to do a viva voce, but rarely. In the case of the dead, it's impossible.

SMITH: But I also sense from what you said about conferences that viva voce is not often very fruitful.

KUBLER: Directed conferences are not very fruitful, no.

REESE: When you finish a book, do you actively wait for the reviews and dialogue that follow? Or by that time have you already put it to bed?

KUBLER: I think when I've finished it and I've started something else, I forget to read the reviews. I'm surprised when I find them.

SMITH: You forget to read the reviews?

KUBLER: Well, I read them when I find them, yes. When they come to my attention or if I'm sent them, which sometimes happens.

SMITH: Of course, this is usually two years after you've finished a manuscript.

KUBLER: Yes. It's slow.

REESE: That's really shaping that next edifice in the dialogue and letting it drift off toward the future. It's the primary--

KUBLER: You go on to something else.

SMITH: What about Jorge Segurado?

KUBLER: Segurado. I don't know him. I don't remember.

SMITH: Jorge Segurado. He also wrote on Portuguese architecture over some period.

KUBLER: Jorge Segurado. Yes. It isn't one of the first names I remember.

SMITH: We discussed Robert Smith last time as a personality.

KUBLER: Yes. Robert C. Smith.

SMITH: Robert C. Smith. Yes, we got that wrong last time.

KUBLER: Robert Chester Smith.

SMITH: What about his role, his model as a scholar for you? Did you find his work posing interesting questions?

KUBLER: Yes. He was older than I, and he was a very prolific writer, especially on Portuguese matters. But he was dedicated to the ornate side of Portuguese architecture and had no concern whatever with this plain

style, so that I didn't need much from his work for the work on the plain style.

SMITH: I wonder-- In terms of the plain style, the appeal of the plain style is the possibility of doing a formal analysis without having to worry much about iconographical overlays. To look at the effects of form.

KUBLER: It's looking at architecture rather than its ornament. The attraction of Portuguese architecture to scholars, both Portuguese and foreign, was its ornateness, the ornament, the ornamental problem. That was Robert Smith's concern. He didn't say much about the architectural structure.

REESE: It's very interesting, in attempting to put together a lecture program this year about culture, one of the most difficult subjects to get at is what has been called the poetics of the plain. Because very little theoretical work in poetics of language or poetics has looked at the kind of plain vernacular. There are practitioners, like J. B. Jackson and like your work, which has concentrated on defining a lot of the fundamental problems. But unlike other fields, it does not have this apparatus of theory and complicated methodologies. Rather, it goes to the artifact with a very direct kind of respect, you know, for the processes that makes it an attempt to open it up. What other

scholars have you found who have treated the poetics of the plain with particular relevance for your particular insight?

KUBLER: Well, many commentators on contemporary twentieth-century architecture have been concerned with the poetics of the plain. There is a resonance between New Mexico and Portugal and contemporary International style simplicity, purity.

REESE: For me, what's interesting in the introduction to the plain-style book is that you take an aesthetic which has long interested you, which is the plain style, but you also take a style which is rooted within a national tradition and in fact within a whole body of Portuguese scholarship, whether or not it's sufficiently treated. But then your primary interest methodologically is to liberate it from a Portuguese vision, so that in fact one is from Brussels to Italy to Spain, looking constantly at those-- I think you call them the "isotherms" in the introduction, these waves of influence that cross. I'm not sure there's a--

KUBLER: Well, I hope I made it clear that I wasn't going to be talking about those anymore than in the introduction. [laughter] I meant to get on with the subject.

SMITH: I found in reading a dissertation by one of your

students, Flora [S.] Clancy, a sentence that caught me. She writes--this was in, I believe, the mid-seventies when she was writing this--"While iconography requires an understanding of analogic and metaphoric conventions for comprehension, the observer need not be literate to understand or respond to form. One cannot help but be affected by form. A large room, a small chair, a megalith, a cameo all elicit conscious or unconscious reactions on the part of the observer." Those are her words, but I wonder how much of that is Kubler's--

KUBLER: Oh, I'd say they're hers. They're hers. It's her language.

SMITH: It's her language, but how much of it is the Focillon-Kubler conception of formal analysis as interpreted by her?

KUBLER: Perhaps.

SMITH: I mean, would you agree or disagree with that statement?

KUBLER: It sounds more like her than it sounds like me. [laughter] She has a very clearly defined personal style, wouldn't you agree? Do you know her?

SMITH: No, I don't know her. What about the key concept I pull out of there, a visceral reaction to form?

KUBLER: I think it's hers.

SMITH: That's hers.

KUBLER: I think it's hers more than mine. She goes farther than I would.

REESE: When you were doing research on the Portuguese book, I know that you were in Belgium for a while.

KUBLER: Yes.

REESE: You were in Italy working on it from those angles.

KUBLER: Yes.

REESE: In those ways, did it intersect a lot of your other concerns? In other words, whereas the work in Italy, the Escorial work-- You know, all kind of crossing in special ways?

KUBLER: Yes, the Escorial is connected with the plain style. The excursion to Brussels was to find a possible correspondence to plain style in sixteenth-century lowland architecture, which was not the case.

REESE: You also, I believe, said that you did that book, you translated to Portuguese--

KUBLER: Yes, da Costa. Felix da Costa.

REESE: As a promise to a friend who had asked you for this book. Was that the plain-style book that a very close Portuguese friend had asked for?

KUBLER: I don't remember this.

REESE: I could have it wrong.

KUBLER: I don't remember this, no. But the Felix da Costa [Antiquity of the Art of Painting] is a history of

painting, and that was a manuscript I found very interesting and enjoyed commenting on. But that was a different situation from the plain style.

SMITH: Were there questions on the plain-style book--again, whether those questions appear or do not appear in the book--that were left unresolved in your mind? That you could not answer to your satisfaction when you completed your study.

KUBLER: Well, I thought I'd answered my questions. I would have to go back and read it again.

SMITH: Were there things in the study that pointed you to future research work?

KUBLER: Well, yes. It firmed my intention to write about the Escorial.

SMITH: Let's move on to that book [Building the Escorial (1982)], which was published ten years later. When did you begin--? Well, we know you began research on that in 1936 with [Erwin] Panofsky.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: But when did you resume intensive work on your study of the Escorial?

KUBLER: I would say after the Portuguese, after the plain style. I may have been encouraging myself to write the plain style with the Escorial in mind, and checking the debt of the Escorial to the plain style, which I found to

be nonexistent. A separate manifestation. Extremely personal to Philip II and his architects.

SMITH: What was there about the Escorial that drew you back to more intensive study about it?

KUBLER: The absence of any discussion of this problem of the plainness. His first architect was Juan Bautista de Toledo, a building master rather than an architect. His drawings exist for the building, but his successor, who was [Juan de] Herrera, redesigned the whole thing. The traces of Juan Bautista de Toledo are very few. Mainly in the foundations, the layout of the foundations. The direction of the building changed with Herrera. Juan Bautista de Toledo still has admirers and followers, and they dislike Herrera. And vice versa--the friends of Herrera discount Juan Bautista de Toledo. But I've thought, and still do, that the building is Herrera's on a ground plan of Juan Bautista de Toledo. The aspect, the visible aspect, is Herrera's. And in close alliance with Philip II.

REESE: Was there a single problem there that you feel really was for you essential? A problem in that book, rather than just numerous problems?

KUBLER: That of plain form, the plainness.

SMITH: In the reviews of the book, there is considerable discussion of the use of documents as historical evidence

and the use of analysis of personal style. Could you speak somewhat about how you viewed the documentary evidence and the formal analysis that you had to do in relative balance?

KUBLER: I was guided by what I found in the very large documentation of the building, which has been published and is available to everybody. There are quantities of remarks in the king's own hand and in the architect's hand, and all of this is the body of evidence that I used.

SMITH: What about the formal analysis of the--?

KUBLER: Well, it suggests the conscious devising of an austere style, austere manner. Deliberately contrived and salvaged, or rescued, from the drawings by Juan Bautista de Toledo that have survived, which are not like the building as it stands. But the building as it stands is Herrera and the king. The king was constantly involved in it.

SMITH: When you were working on the Escorial book, what kind of seminars were you offering? Graduate seminars.

KUBLER: I've forgotten.

SMITH: I'm wondering-- With the Teotihuacán and the Maya work, the graduate seminars are very clearly connected.

KUBLER: I continued these pre-Columbian studies all during my teaching time.

SMITH: So you did not feel the need to do specifically

Iberian seminars that would focus your attention--

KUBLER: No. I didn't teach the Portuguese book, and I didn't teach the Escorial either.

SMITH: How come?

KUBLER: I was too busy writing it.

SMITH: But, nonetheless, with the Tikal and the Teotihuacán and the Maya iconography, you felt you had to teach these graduate seminars so closely intertwined with that work. What's the distinction between--?

KUBLER: I don't think any students appeared wanting to know about the plain style or the Escorial. It didn't seem to me to be a fair shake for the students. There's so much more.

SMITH: Were you continuing to teach the sort of material that you developed in the Penguin book on Spain and Portugal?

KUBLER: Yes. That was my routine of teaching. That was the pre-Columbian studies--and Latin American colonial occasionally.

SMITH: Colonial, but not Iberian.

KUBLER: Not Iberian, no, not Spanish. Not Spanish art. I don't think I ever taught-- I never taught the Escorial, and I never taught the plain style. I was too busy writing them.

SMITH: You said that was also partly because there was no

client demand.

KUBLER: And there was no client demand. The client demand was a steady one.

SMITH: For pre-Columbian.

KUBLER: For pre-Columbian, some part of pre-Columbian studies or all of it or--

SMITH: But you did have students, graduate students, who were working with you on-- I guess it was Latin American architecture specifically.

REESE: And Spanish.

KUBLER: Yes. What did you do?

REESE: Well, I was there and Cathy [Catherine] Wilkinson was there. Molly Volk. The young man who worked on Murillo whose name I can't remember. He was working on the fame of Murillo. Richard Steinman?

KUBLER: Steinmetz.

REESE: Steinmetz. So there were some, but they were each working on painting or on architectural projects on their own.

SMITH: So there were no seminars of Spanish art per se.

KUBLER: I think I may have run a seminar for these students we've been talking about in which they would bring their work as they were working.

REESE: And Yves Bottineau came to teach at Yale at that time, and so did René Taylor, as visiting professors.

KUBLER: René Taylor was a Hispanist. Yes, they were Hispanists, and they came when I was on the--

REESE: I still am fascinated by-- Not saying what I think the book Escorial treats, but we're going to have you talk more about what kind of problems you were really getting at in that book and what fascinated you about it. The size. The difference between Juan Bautista de Toledo and Juan de Herrera.

KUBLER: Well, I think a lot of it is in the title. Building the Escorial. It's building. The focus of the book is building, and the documents are so complete, the documentation. The cost of the materials, the shaping of the materials, the bringing of the materials together is all documented. I tried to use that professorial concept of how a building achieves its form.

REESE: Was there a kind of bottom line for you in what the message was in this particular case?

KUBLER: I tried to trace it out as it happened, with the foundations being quite separate from the elevations, and the effect of the materials that were available on the form, these quarries. Where were they? How far away were they? And then the enormous number of foreign craftsmen from Northern Europe, from the Low Countries, for the slate for the roofs, for much of the ornament. The Italians.

REESE: But in the process of writing this book, you took one of the principal monuments of European architecture that is usually understood as being a personal kind of projection of Philip II for an individual architect and in some way pulled the rug out from under that. In other words, rather than at the end saying it was.

KUBLER: I think I left the relationship between Philip and Herrera as it is in the correspondence, a close one. A close one of almost daily contact on matters concerning the building, so that the architect and the patron were in unusually close connection. The patron was available. It was his summer occupation, and he was there much of the time in the rest of the year. Twenty miles from Madrid.

REESE: But the documentation itself seemed to be supporting the notion that there was no single architect, there was no single idea, but rather there was a multiplicity of problems that were constantly being resolved in ways that seem to create the monument. That the building itself has a matrix, seemed to have its own momentum, its own rationale that served both as a limit and as a stimulus to those who apparently directed it. But I wonder if you would agree with that, if you felt that that's what you were working towards in some way.

KUBLER: Well, I suppose any major enterprise of that magnitude seems to develop a will of its own. But it's

always capable of reduction to what's in the plans, what's in the specifications, what's in the orders for the materials. It's all there, and if the supervision is uninterrupted, that personality of the building emerges more and more and more. It's there in the intention of the designers and the people otherwise responsible for it. I found the nature of the building in its building.

REESE: Had that concept been with you from the beginning?

KUBLER: Yes. When I began serious work on it, then that was my intention.

REESE: Did you expect the book to have a much broader methodological kind of lesson than merely its subject matter? Meaning the Escorial in the context of Europe in the 1560s, seventies, and eighties.

KUBLER: I was so immersed in this that it wrote itself. I didn't have any difficulties writing it. It wrote itself, if one can say that. [laughter]

SMITH: Were you suggesting a prescriptive model, in the sense that more attention needs to be put to the process of construction in architectural history?

KUBLER: One could draw that lesson, that the process of construction, design and construction, is revealing of the nature of the building.

SMITH: That might suggest that even though perhaps the initial appeal of the Escorial study was the plain style,

the real critical factor was the archive.

KUBLER: I was drawn to it by the plainness, yes.

SMITH: But perhaps it was the archive that was actually the key to the book, that made the book possible.

KUBLER: Yes, I discovered the wealth of the evidence. Which is not easily found. One has to go and look at it in Simancas and other places.

REESE: For most authors and for many who have preceded you-- The prospect of taking such a monumental and complex archive-- And in fact, rather than simply taking a single thesis and pushing it through, to build up from that bedrock, that tissue, those words you used in the book, towards an image of enormous complexity-- It seems to me unusual that you say it was easy to write, because, in fact, the complexity of it would seem to make it the most difficult thing to write.

KUBLER: It was always clear and easy to write. There were no agonizing uncertainties about the book. It wrote itself.

SMITH: Because the archives presented a story to you?

KUBLER: Well, the archives are so explicit. I spent many, many weeks in the archive and had access to everything that was needed. Of course, the archive is immense, and it also is very simply organized. The rationale of the archive is easily extracted and its

relation to the building. The parts that are relevant.

REESE: Do you feel that imbedded in the book was a certain critique of those studies that attempt to deal with the building through personalities and personal style, through singular iconographical programs?

KUBLER: I had no quarrel with any work that had been done before. This one had not been done. This had not been done this way. So I was certain of what I was doing, and I didn't have to clear the way with other approaches. [laughter] The building of the Escorial. The act of building.

REESE: I mean, my reaction to the book was that it took a single monument that had usually been treated with--or which inspired people to want to search for--a singular explanation and ultimately reduced it down to this microhistorical level, where you in fact found the same kind of form classes that were essential, you know, to your arguments in The Shape of Time: [Remarks on the History of Things (1962)] in any work of art. That it kind of took the single monument and in fact demonstrated a lot of what The Shape of Time was about in a single work of art.

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NOVEMBER 19, 1991

SMITH: I have a note here from Tom [Reese], and I wanted to pursue the role of one name that I hadn't mentioned, that of Mario Chicó.

KUBLER: Oh, yes. He's an old and dear friend. He was. He died. I think he died.

SMITH: In Tom's note it says that Chicó was one of the people who introduced you to the *estilo chão* and got you interested in it originally. Do you recall that, any discussions?

KUBLER: I remember talking with him about it, yes.

SMITH: Did he feel that it had not been adequately treated?

KUBLER: He thought it was a good subject.

SMITH: Had not yet been treated by art historians dealing with Portuguese topics?

KUBLER: He realized that, yes.

SMITH: Now, he was also a student of [Henri] Focillon.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: Did you meet him through Focillon?

KUBLER: No, but he told me that he had studied with him in Paris.

SMITH: You had similar interests, then. Was he someone

whom you talked to about the ideas in the book as you were developing them?

KUBLER: I think so. We discussed it as it was going along, and I think we went on some automobile tours together to look at towns.

SMITH: Did the Gulbenkian Foundation fund any of your research?

KUBLER: Yes. I believe they funded-- I can't remember what it was they funded, but it wasn't much. It wasn't a big gift.

SMITH: I was wondering, to what degree in your work have your kind of daily decisions--or your immediate decisions on what to work on next--been affected by practical questions like the availability of funding to support a research trip or transcription of something or photographic archives?

KUBLER: There was never any trouble, and I don't remember any. It was just a matter of knowing where to apply and when, and there was never any delay, because I planned ahead and found out about how to do it. I don't remember ever being turned down.

SMITH: I mean, are there scholars who you might consider driven by finances, driven in the sense of their work as somewhat dependent on the availability of funds from different sources?

KUBLER: Oh, of course. There are a lot of starving scholars. [laughter] There are a lot of deserving teachers who can never secure a research fellowship because they've done no research. That's a sad case, but it's a very common one.

SMITH: But in that case it's usually the professor who has to be their chaperon, as it were.

KUBLER: Their sponsor, yes.

SMITH: Their sponsor.

KUBLER: But one can be one's own sponsor the moment one has something to show.

SMITH: Well, that's part of the apprenticeship process. Your graduate students, your doctoral students, how many of them did you take that kind of paternal interest in, in the sense of--?

KUBLER: Oh, practically all of them.

SMITH: All of them.

KUBLER: All of them needed money to start. There was more money around then than now.

SMITH: And in terms of getting them positions? Would you call around and see--?

KUBLER: I would always write for them whenever required by the institution or the person. I would always write.

SMITH: Would you do something even more beyond that, in the sense of calling friends at other institutions and

saying, "I have so-and-so who is really good in this. Do you have--?"

KUBLER: That more for posts rather than for grants. I've often called a friend for a promising student.

SMITH: I was wondering--particularly in fields like ancient American and Iberian, where, in a sense, one almost has to develop the field in other institutions--if you felt the need to take an aggressive role and see if you could create a position at another school.

KUBLER: Gradually the people who'd studied with me were in posts of these studies in various institutions. So I had them as people to whom to praise a coming candidate.

SMITH: Tom wanted to ask you some more questions about the Tikal studies and I think about Portugal and the Escorial as well.

REESE: Well, I think we can go back to the Maya work, because Richard talked a good bit about the Tikal project. But I thought, you know, the other area of interest to pursue would be the whole question of Maya epigraphy and the history of that decipherment and what kind of thoughts you have in retrospect about its evolution as a field and art history's relationship to it.

KUBLER: Well, the decipherment is a very technical operation involving a very large number of unknowns and relatively few pieces in the game. That side of the study

never interested me very much. Whenever I approached it, I turned it into a morphological study. For example, I wrote a long paper on the glyphs of Tikal. It was a study of their changing forms, their changing dimensions and orientations, whether there was a long block or a tall block or a square block or a round block. There was a long-term pattern evident in the abandonment of wide, flat blocks in favor of increasingly more gracious blocks of different proportions. This process covered about eight or nine centuries. I wrote an article on this that I planned to have as part of the publication of the team we were discussing last night. But that was turned off by the Tikal people in Philadelphia, who would not let me use their photographs, which is why I never published the article. I gave a long lecture on it to a group of specialists in foreign writings, foreign forms of writing, but it never reached publication because I couldn't use the photographs or drawings.

SMITH: If I understand you correctly, then, it would be in a sense equivalent to discussing the evolution of the alphabet, perhaps, and how it's--

KUBLER: Well, the evolution of the forms of the alphabet.

SMITH: Without concern with what the specific symbols--

KUBLER: Without concern for the meaning.

SMITH: Meaning, right.

KUBLER: I left that to the epigraphers.

REESE: I mean, we've talked before about the kind of territorial domains of archaeology guarding its frontiers, which this relationship you've had to the Tikal project represents. But it seems to me that there is--peculiar to the study of Maya culture in particular, and perhaps more so than with Peruvian or the Aztec culture--a similar kind of cry of "Maya for the Mayanists" or even "Art for the linguists." I wonder if you just have any ideas about how that has somehow come to be. Is there anything inherent in Maya art itself, or in the types of people who have been attracted to it, that has led to that?

KUBLER: I think the explanation in my mind is that Mayanists are very few in number. It takes a great dedication, a great deal of time, the results are very slow, and the study isn't very rewarding. But they all know each other, and they are a closely bound community of specialists. They do not like amateurs intruding. I think my paper that I did not publish was one that was alien to their form of study and their method of approaching the linguistic side--putting the sound together with the sign. So that they felt that our work was useless, and that was the beginning of the end.

REESE: I mean, I wonder if I could get you to talk a little bit about the different stages in the development

of the decipherment, from [J. Eric] Thompson and [Tatiana] Proskouriakoff and [Floyd G.] Lounsbury and others who have worked on the problem, and particularly your relationship to that emerging field of study.

KUBLER: Oh, I was a friend of Tatiana Proskouriakoff, and she was a key figure in the early breaking open of the way into, or the reading of, the glyphs. She really took the first big steps, and her method has been followed ever since. She died some years ago, and it was a great loss.

REESE: And Thompson.

KUBLER: Thompson, Eric Thompson, as I said last night, was an Englishman. This was a hobby of his, and it became a dominant interest in his life. He made the handbook of the glyph forms, which is still a very useful guide and is always cited. It has not been superseded by others. There are others which do different things.

REESE: What other scholars' work in that area do you have a particular kind of fascination for or interest in?

KUBLER: Well, they were all interesting people, and there weren't many of them. It was a very tight and closed circle of museum staffers and linguists and archaeologists who were pooling their efforts. Very interesting group, but very small. And very closed to the outsider.

REESE: I mean, you did, I would say, an enormous amount of work on this during the seventies. In other words, a

number of articles-- Well, it's opening new doors in approaches to glyphic studies, but also looking at some very precise subjects of Palenque and others. What was it that pulled you in so to the glyph?

KUBLER: Well, it was the possibility of a morphological study, the study of the forms of the glyphs, of the shapes of the glyph blocks. That was the study that I put the largest amount of effort in.

REESE: How might you describe the development of this field following the emergence of Linda Schele and others, who came into it really--? As an artist, in Linda Schele's case.

KUBLER: Yes, she was an artist.

REESE: But that was happening-- At the same time you were developing a morphological interest in certain qualities, she was developing another approach.

KUBLER: A linguistic approach.

REESE: I'm just wondering, you know, what you might say about Schele's approach and your relationship to this changing field.

KUBLER: Well, I was not competent. I admit it. I was not linguistically competent. These are linguists, mainly. They are linguists. Without being a linguist, one can't circulate. One can't talk to them.

SMITH: In discussing the work with them and with others,

how did you present the importance of the morphological studies?

REESE: Just by presenting it. I gave a lecture once and I wanted to publish it, but I wasn't allowed to use the photographs.

SMITH: But did you argue that this kind of work did have fundamental value in understanding Maya society?

KUBLER: I argued that this method would be fruitful with any long run of inscriptions, long in time, long in duration, the duration covered. There are other eight-hundred-year-long groups of inscriptions at different sites. This message could be applied to other sites. This morphological method.

SMITH: The morphological method would be a form of dating?

KUBLER: It would be a form of dating. If, as so often happens, the merchant owning the inscription saws it up into pieces, sometimes only a block large, one loses the inscription. But it can be put together again. It can be identified very easily as to where it belongs and where it comes from now, because the corpus is more or less finished, the corpus that has been worked on at Harvard Peabody Museum [of Archaeology and Ethnology] with Ian Graham directing it. That corpus is very slow to appear, but it's very thorough, and all the inscriptions will

someday be available.

REESE: But I sense in your answer a certain kind of resignation at this point to the fact that the linguists have somehow succeeded in locking the doors--or at least people who consider themselves to be linguists.

KUBLER: Well, they open the doors. They open doors, and have really closed them to other approaches.

REESE: You think that's to the detriment of Maya studies.

KUBLER: I think this morphological study I made would be useful if it had appeared.

SMITH: I understand that Linda Schele developed-- In a sense, she developed a new paradigm for Maya studies. Do you agree with that?

KUBLER: I think she was among those who developed it. But I don't think she was the main figure. She was the noisiest figure. [laughter] She had no modesty about her work, or she has no modesty about her work.

REESE: Have you followed into the eighties and nineties the work that's being done in Maya hieroglyphs?

KUBLER: No. I have not. I've been doing other things. It's really unrewarding beyond a certain point. I think the age of redundancy has descended on the Maya glyphic scene. The discoveries are less and less instructive and more and more saying the same thing. The study of Maya glyphs from the linguistic point of view has become

redundant. It's almost all done. There are very few expressions that aren't understood at least in part.

REESE: So in other words, once Proskouriakoff basically breaks the historical nature--

KUBLER: Once she sort of shows people how to do it, then everybody can do it.

REESE: So your feeling is that your work--

KUBLER: But one needs a linguistic tool, language. The language. The dialects.

REESE: But your work, then, was not in some way confronting the body of scholarship that Schele and disciples were, but coming from a different angle.

KUBLER: It was a totally different line, a morphological line. A morphology of the block, the shape of the block, proportions, its axiality, its surface characteristics. All of these are very telling about the position in time.

REESE: Have you been attracted at all to other forms of writing from these perspectives? The morphological perspective of--literally--character formation and calligraphy.

KUBLER: No. This is my only venture.

SMITH: I noticed in 1977 you participated in a symposium on Chinese calligraphy.

KUBLER: That's where I delivered this paper. They wanted to publish it, and I said, "No, I don't think I want to

publish it with these papers. I will publish it for the Maya community of studies." I wish I had let them publish it, but they would have run into trouble with the use of the photographs that were restricted.

SMITH: I found it curious. In that symposium, there were nearly two dozen papers, and yours was the only one that was not specifically on some question or another of Chinese calligraphy.

KUBLER: That's right. It was.

SMITH: Who saw the connection--?

KUBLER: The whole thing was run by a very charming Chinese couple who were visiting in New Haven. They put this on. They heard about this paper, and they wanted it. So they insisted that I give the lecture. It was the only time I ever gave it. Oh, I guess I gave it once in Honduras, in Tegucigalpa.

REESE: And in Texas, I remember, you gave a version on the proportions in the glyphs.

KUBLER: Yes, the proportions. Yes, you heard that. Yes, it was the same lecture.

REESE: Would you consider your own suggestions about new ways of approaching the problem to be in some way the product of an autodidact trying to look at these glyphs from an art historical point of view?

KUBLER: Very much so from the point of view of the

linguist. I was an outsider, and I was not qualified. They were quite right. But I think it had something to say that was independently confirming of the linguistic discoveries that were being made.

SMITH: In what sense confirming?

KUBLER: Of possibilities of dating by inspection of the forms. Linguistic in the case of the linguists, and visual in the case of my method.

SMITH: In terms of a humanistic interpretation of Maya culture, there was the debate over the possible peaceful versus warlike nature of Maya society and the historical transition into a more warlike state. There were also questions of whether economics and trade were motivating or ideology and religion were motivating factors. Do you think your approach would have had anything to contribute to those kinds of subjective interpretations?

KUBLER: No. I think what my approach was directed to was chronology, establishing a chronological sequence independently of what the glyphs said. The glyphs talk about time, but there is an outside way of putting those expressions into chronological order--which is morphological.

SMITH: Does art history as a humanistic enterprise have something to contribute to the evaluation of Maya society as a bundle of values and the transformation of those

values and what may or may not have been important?

KUBLER: It may, it may, when the whole body of inscriptions has been deciphered. But it's far from that. The whole body. The whole body is a large number of forms and variants, and somewhere between one-half and two-thirds are understood. In part. In part. How much is not understood of the glyphs that it is believed have been deciphered remains to be seen. There may be overtones that escape the methods of reading that are used by present Maya scholars.

SMITH: Do you think art history would contribute to reading overtones?

KUBLER: Yes. But they'd have to become linguists to do it.

REESE: Would you consider what Linda Schele does to be the work of a linguist?

KUBLER: I think it is, yes. She knows Maya and several dialects well enough to see their connection and their applicability to different kinds of inscriptions. But that's beginning to be a study which very few are competent for.

SMITH: When you got involved with this project, the Tikal project, did you have a sense that there were opponents, there were enemies?

KUBLER: No, I didn't, because my contacts at the

Philadelphia museum--at the University of Pennsylvania [University] Museum--were inviting. But I think that the direction changed. The direction of the efforts changed in the museum. There was a turnover. Certain figures left the museum and other figures came, and there was a change of policy. And this project was found to be useless and not worth the candle.

REESE: I'm trying to think through a kind of larger issue that seems to underlie this, but that I'm having a hard time putting my finger on. That is the almost cautionary nature of your work in the late sixties and seventies as you enter the field of glyphic study, which you were approaching in some ways as a structuralist. I don't want to oversimplify it, but-- To look at wholes and to look with method and to look with order and to try to control the kind of building blocks you create so that others can build upon them. At a moment in which a number of scholars were in some way tearing down some of this method to free associate and to let things start tumbling very quickly open and creating a kind of movement that in some ways seems akin to the shift from structuralism to poststructuralism. But then suddenly this cycle of freedom closes down again and resists new voices entering again. It's interesting that those who come afterwards, like Mary Miller and others, seem to have taken another

kind of path of, let's say for want of a better word, conciliation. Conciliation. Did you sense yourself in the middle of changes?

KUBLER: No, I felt that this episode was the result of a change in the organization of the museum in which the studies were housed. And that had to do with the change of the head. There had been a change of director. The new director was against this use of the resources which the museum was disbursing.

SMITH: You must have felt a certain degree of frustration and anger at what happened.

KUBLER: Well, I was sorry not to have the use of the photographs in order to publish the article.

SMITH: In the sense that this work had an incompletion--you could not present it to the public in the form that you wanted--did that in any way affect other things that you were working on? For instance, you moved on to the Escorial book [Building the Escorial (1982)]. As you considered the problems facing you in the Escorial book, did you--?

KUBLER: Then I'd stop spending time on my inscriptions, yes. [laughter]

SMITH: But did you in the methodology of the Escorial book--? Were you thinking, "Well, now I'm going to demonstrate the importance of morphological studies"?

KUBLER: No, I didn't think of it that way. It was almost more a social study of the Escorial, of its organization, the relationship of its construction to the organizational form.

REESE: Can you analyze your own reaction to the kind of reception, or nonreception, of the work you were doing on the Maya glyphs? I mean, earlier you said, you know, that scholarship was this dialogue. This is a case in which you, I think, floated some very innovative, unique, not-before-essayed ideas for a whole field of study. Yet I'm now listening to you say, "But I left it."

KUBLER: I wanted to do something else after this paper was finished. I didn't want to do another one. I had other things on the docket. So I left Maya studies.

REESE: But it wasn't because you felt that it was infertile ground for the work you were doing, but rather that you felt you had exhausted whatever--

KUBLER: I had exhausted what I could do with the present equipment, so I left the field.

REESE: Have you found scholars rediscovering some of these articles in the seventies and trying to take off from places that you had--?

KUBLER: I'm not aware of anyone's having discovered this one. [laughter] Well, it hasn't been published.

REESE: But I'm thinking also of the work on kind of

placement at Tikal and the question of different kinds of temporal meanings, of the cinemagraphic aspect--

KUBLER: All of those were windows opening from that study it would have been interesting to pursue, which if I had continued I would have pursued. Tikal was the best and most well preserved and the most promising site for this sort of study.

REESE: I mean, in analyzing those works before, in the preparation of the collected essays, I found to be for me one of the most fertile grounds that I had felt that you had really worked. Yet I found it also interesting that it was precisely the Mayanists who seemed to be interested only in the points where it intersected their work, as opposed to the points at which it opened new doors. Being outside of Maya studies, I just had very little insight as to why a field that seemed to be opening in other ways was closing down around other kinds of particularly morphological, but also interpretive questions. These involved very complex issues of the meaning of time, of art in the service of conceptual representation of rulership, of time and cinemagraphic function of perception of objects in time and space and light. Have students of yours from the years in which you were pioneering that work taken these further?

KUBLER: Mary Miller has made some interesting finds on

her own, and she's very able. I was at the point where if I meant to continue with Maya studies, I had better master the language. I wasn't ready to do it. So I really left the field not from disappointment, but from unwillingness to sacrifice other interests to becoming a linguist.

REESE: So this pioneering edge seems very important in your career.

KUBLER: Yes.

REESE: The correct entrance with the problem.

KUBLER: Yes.

REESE: Not attacking the late stage.

KUBLER: I really couldn't become a linguist in a few months. It would be a matter of several years and exposure to the language in the country and to dialect forms and the sort of training a linguist has. I realized that I was wasting my time in those studies.

SMITH: Have you given any thought to returning to ancient American or Native American topics?

KUBLER: Well, I've enlarged my ideas about New Mexico in a paper I've written this year on the resemblances between, oddly enough, New Mexico, Paraguay, and the Californias, both of them. These four areas are areas where encomienda had been the principal colonial form of bondage and exploitation. So this is a sociological study rather than an art historical one. New Mexico, the

pueblos; the Guaraní, Paraguayans; and the Californias. They have many traits in common through their mission systems.

SMITH: Are you discussing at all the effect of the _encomienda_ system on the architecture?

KUBLER: Not on the architecture, but on the society.

SMITH: On the society. The society is the focus. The architecture isn't much mentioned.

REESE: But on settlement patterns in a general way?

KUBLER: Settlement patterns, yes. The mission forms. The mission forms are closely related in these four areas. Then there is the intervention of the Dominicans in the eighteenth century and earlier. It's the Dominicans who were the first to follow the footsteps of their bishop, Las Casas, in the condemnation of _encomienda_ as early as 1524. The Dominicans bridge many periods and places with this Las Casian policy of resisting and refusing all forms of _encomienda_ or _mita_--Indian, free Indian labor.

REESE: This for you is a study which goes way back to an article really from the forties, at least, contrasting Mexican and Californian settlements.

KUBLER: Yes, yes. It's an expansion of that article.

REESE: How did it come to light for you again as a problem? Do you remember the--?

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KUBLER: It was the realization that encomienda was the institution which the mission system was opposing and destroying. The four clearest cases are these.

REESE: But the Guaraní settlements I guess are new.

KUBLER: They are the Jesuit settlements. But the Jesuits are, like the Dominicans, the followers of Las Casas in his denunciation of encomienda, which is very well documented.

REESE: What I was after concretely was some sense of the mechanism that at this point in time shifted your attention from the book on the aesthetic recognition [Esthetic Recognition of Ancient Amerindian Art (1991)]. With that behind you, that your eye landed on once again the question of colonial. Was there a concrete thing, a request for a paper or--?

KUBLER: There was a request for a paper, and I offered this. I was working on it already, and I'll give it at Harvard [University] in May. It's to an audience not of art historians, but more a social science audience.

SMITH: [to Reese] Do you want to have any follow-up questions on the Portugal plain-style book [Portuguese Plain Architecture: Between Spices and Diamonds, 1526-1706

(1972)] or the Escorial [Building the Escorial].

REESE: I don't think so. Let's move forward.

SMITH: I want to shift back a little bit in time into another subject, a more general subject, which is your perceptions of the 1960s student movements at Yale [University] and if there were any effects on your classes. Were any of your students involved in the protest movements of that period?

KUBLER: I was aware of the movements, but I was not aware of them through the classes or the students. The students, our students in the department and the other students that came to the department, seemed untouched by these disturbances. They weren't discussed, the disturbances weren't discussed. They were in the air. Everybody was living them, but not talking about them very much. I wasn't at any time near any demonstrative dissenters in my work.

SMITH: Well, for instance, let's take some of the specific issues. The Vietnam War. You were not requested to cancel your classes in order to have a discussion of the invasion of Cambodia, for example?

KUBLER: No. I always had the illusion of perfect academic freedom in my work, no matter what was happening in the world. Yale was a place where there was a lot of lack of concern with these troubles. [laughter]

SMITH: Yet there was-- I mean, a persistent theme in the sixties was that the American university had become the handmaiden of the military-industrial complex.

KUBLER: I don't remember any effect of it on my work.

SMITH: Or on your teaching.

KUBLER: Or on my teaching. I never had to manifest any such interest. No one ever requested me to join.

SMITH: This is a personal question, but I'm curious to know what your feelings were at the time about the Vietnam War.

KUBLER: I followed it with dismay and disapproval.

SMITH: Were you sympathetic, then, to the student protests that were taking place around the country?

KUBLER: Yes, but I did nothing.

SMITH: Then the other major issue--and I understand this in some ways was even a bigger issue at Yale--was the question of civil rights and integration. What kind of effect did you perceive that having on the Yale community?

KUBLER: There again, it was a distant noise. It was a distant noise--it didn't come very close.

SMITH: There was the strike of the service workers and clerical workers.

KUBLER: Oh, yes. We had the marines in the town and pitching camp on the green and artillery in the streets. And the [Yale University Art] Gallery was put on a twenty-

four-hour basis of patrolling. Betty [Elizabeth Bushnell Kubler] and I went down and slept in the gallery and walked the rounds for the signals to show that someone was manning them. We did that for several nights, and then the trouble was over. We went back to square one.

REESE: This was in '68 with the [Black] Panther trials, coinciding here with--

KUBLER: The Panther trials. That was it. You were here, weren't you?

REESE: Yeah. Coinciding with major kind of feelings about Vietnam expressed. The burning of the A and A [Art and Architecture] Building.

KUBLER: Yes, yes. Oh, yes.

REESE: The fire in the A and A Building.

KUBLER: That was really a scandal. That was a set fire.

SMITH: Beyond the demonstrations, of course, and the protest movements, equally important in terms of academic history, American university history, is that the norms of the post-World War II period were challenged across the board in the humanities and social sciences. The consensus school in history, the functionalists in the social sciences, were-- The hegemony that they had was challenged in part by the rise of first the structuralists, then the poststructuralists, and then the deconstructionists. I'd like to discuss with you this

challenge that students demonstrated to move away from empiricism and a positivist attitude about knowledge to embrace sort of totalizing cognitive maps, and the effect that it had within the art history department and with your students. For instance, did you have students in the post-'68 period who were Marxists, who would come to you with Marxist projects?

KUBLER: Yes. I remember two or three, and I encouraged them. But nothing came of them.

SMITH: They didn't complete the projects.

KUBLER: They didn't complete the work.

SMITH: What about the rise of Guevarism and Frantz Fanon in a Third World perspective, which I think would have tremendous impact upon Latin American studies? What kind of effect did that have on your work--? Not your work personally, but students who would present themselves to you.

KUBLER: I would say none. I would say none. I was never under any pressure to do anything about these movements, and I could ignore them because I had never given voice on them.

SMITH: So there were no challenges.

KUBLER: I'd never taken a side and I was never challenged, and I was allowed to persist in my inaction.

SMITH: There were no challenges from students saying, "We

need a Native American studies center on campus, and we're going to be the ones responsible for studying the native cultures of the Americas."

KUBLER: No. At that time there was no such organized pressure evident on the campus.

REESE: You know, I think, though--

KUBLER: Wouldn't you agree?

REESE: I was going to add, though, that within the art history establishment, if you had spent a lifetime cultivating in fact the study of outsider or outside the canonical mainstream, be it Native American, African, pre-Columbian-- All of those people drawn into those fields of studies were often, you know, tremendously aware of the problem of the marginated cultural study. In other words, that this had been cast from the programs of academia and marginated. Therefore, within the sectors that George was teaching, one might find a number of people who already felt themselves committed to those larger critical cultural agendas.

KUBLER: That I took for granted, yes. There always were.

REESE: Although you did have, if I remember correctly, during the late sixties Marimar Benitez, who left academia for the Puerto Rican cause.

KUBLER: Yes, of course.

REESE: And Joyce Bailey must have been very involved in

feminist agendas at one point.

KUBLER: Yes.

REESE: Flora [S.] Clancy was very influenced by [Roland] Barthes and by semiology and by leftist agendas. They were present.

KUBLER: I never had the impression while teaching these people, lecturing to them, that I wasn't giving them what they wanted. They never succeeded in communicating such a thought to me.

SMITH: That's curious, because you have such a strong position on not having a priori conclusions. And yet when you deal with the post-'68 phenomenon in academia, there is the necessity of going into the subject in order to prove a point, albeit the oppression of such and such a group or the need of such and such a strategy to achieve liberation. And I'm wondering in terms of your work with the students, how you counsel them, how you discuss "academic objectivity," which increasingly is under assault epistemologically, with the very intense emotional and ideological concerns of some of your students.

KUBLER: I was never reproached for what I didn't say. [laughter]

SMITH: But what about what you did say? What did you say--?

KUBLER: I was never reproached really for what I did say

or for what I did not say.

SMITH: But let's turn it around. What did you say to a student who was intending to prove that--?

KUBLER: I gave them the information they needed for the understanding of the things they were looking at.

SMITH: There was never a question of--

KUBLER: There was never a doctrinal issue.

SMITH: You know, that "Your conclusion is too predetermined. If you're going to be a historian, you have to have some kind of objectivity that is--"

KUBLER: I never had any such manifestation or representation made to me during all those years of teaching.

SMITH: Another challenge to the question of objectivity is raised by the French poststructuralist [Michel] Foucault in particular and later by the deconstruction school, which Yale is famous, if not notorious, for being the center of in the U.S.

KUBLER: Yes, [Paul] de Man.

SMITH: Yes. And Harold Bloom.

KUBLER: And Harold Bloom.

SMITH: How did those kinds of trends manifest themselves in your work?

KUBLER: I was aware of them, but we didn't talk about them.

SMITH: In art history?

KUBLER: We had other things to talk about. We had much to talk about in the classroom. The classroom was not programmed by any political issue.

SMITH: You have taken up discussion of Foucault, perhaps sometimes in an oblique manner, but I think he is a thinker you have tried to grapple with.

KUBLER: Yes, but not in the audience of a classroom.

SMITH: Okay, but in terms of--

KUBLER: And I was never asked to. I was never asked to account for anything in terms of Foucault or in terms of anyone else whom I hadn't suggested. I had given readings and a bibliography which pertained to the subject and to the discussion, but not to the political arena that might be drawn around it. No one ever thought to define such an area in the course of a year's work or a term's work. It may be that I was shunned by student agitators, but I don't see why they would shun me.

SMITH: Well, for instance, your little note on Las Meninas is to me clearly a rebuttal to Foucault. And the whole, in its very brief form, is still a challenge to building his construction of a vision of power and the panopticon of vision off of very casual art historical references. And it's possible that Building the Escorial could be-- I could look at it not as a response, but as

your own effort to engage in deconstruction theory.

KUBLER: My own image. My own imagery.

SMITH: Yes, your own imagery of deconstruction.

KUBLER: Perhaps that was acceptable. [laughter] I always had the impression that my thought was accessible, and I had most diverse kinds of classes. I've never felt a loss of communication with these undergraduate classes. Or with the graduate work. I always felt in harmony with my audiences. I remember no episodes. Do you?

REESE: No. I mean, I only remember the challenges to [Vincent] Scully, say, as master of Morse College, where--

KUBLER: Scully is a different matter.

REESE: You know, where he in many ways felt very strong empathy for the left, and yet could not quite go left enough. Or I'm sure Bob [Robert Ferris] Thompson, as a white scholar teaching black and Afro-American art, might have had severe confrontations. But many faculty at Yale, when I was there in '68, I think simply were trying to teach.

KUBLER: They were being confronted. Or they turned away.

REESE: Or they turned away from the issues. But I don't remember in your classes any of this, although many of the students were very much involved in these political events outside the classroom.

KUBLER: I was aware of that. I was aware of that. And I was always surprised that they never spoke of it to me.

REESE: I think it brings up in some ways, you know, your own status within the field and within art history as a profession. That people at that point had come to Yale to study specifically with George Kubler as an expert in a field that had not been, in fact, available on any other campus. And therefore the feeling of wanting to learn right from the pioneer and from the eminent scholar might have in many ways, you know, cushioned you. Or in fact not cushioned you, simply removed you from this moment of contention.

SMITH: But beyond the specific contentions, there's still, shall we say, an intellectual shift in America from a more empirical approach to an approach that favors totalizing answers, whether it's Marxism or a theory of feminism or poststructuralism. A demand for cognitive maps.

KUBLER: Well, I haven't been in the classroom now for eight years. Yes, eight years. It may be very different now. I might have no audience at all. [laughter]

SMITH: Well, I doubt that, but-- Did you have any personal interaction with de Man?

KUBLER: I didn't know him. I didn't know him on the street, either. I didn't know who he was. His past was

bared only after he left, wasn't it?

SMITH: After he died. I wasn't thinking so much of his past as Yale's repute as the deconstruction center of the Western hemisphere.

KUBLER: Yes. Oh, yes. But that was pretty parochial. [laughter] It was confined to the English department.

SMITH: And Harold Bloom? Did you have any contact with Bloom?

KUBLER: I know Bloom well and he knows me, and we respect each other.

SMITH: Let me ask you-- I mean, if we assume for the sake of argument that Building the Escorial is your riposte to deconstruction, your image of deconstruction, why not then acknowledge that in the structure of the book and in the introduction? Say, "I'm presenting a methodological model for how deconstruction might work, corrected for the art historical intellectual universe."

KUBLER: Well, it would be recognized as having been dictated by you. [laughter] I don't think I was noted for any political remarks of any color at any time.

SMITH: Well, again, when you take Las Meninas, this very nice, very compelling handful of paragraphs, and yet you're challenging a large--

KUBLER: Many interpretations.

SMITH: Many interpretations and very powerful

interpretations. Why not then expand it to discuss Foucault and the others who have used Las Meninas to construct their interpretations of structures of power, how intellectual study fits into the power system?

KUBLER: Well, I already have too much to do. Too much to do. Too much that's unfinished.

SMITH: But surely you knew when you wrote that and submitted it that you were in effect making a comment on something upon which there was an industry, almost.

KUBLER: Yes. It was wrong. It was wrong, the accepted view of the reading of that picture. That picture of a picture.

REESE: I think, too, your work always intersects these larger kind of paradigmatic movements in very unpredictable ways. So that the studies of ethnicity that were coming to the fore in the early seventies, you had done in the thirties and forties. In the same way that, you know, one never feels a kind of lens focusing them into contemporaneity, but rather the work seems to have passed through a lot of these questions that only later become subjects of enormous focus across the field.

KUBLER: And controversy.

REESE: And by then, you often have left them behind. So aligning yourself with them has not been so important. To create the filiations that would link you to what others

have done doesn't seem to happen very often, avowedly anyway.

KUBLER: You can bury the truth in the present, so that it doesn't get known for a while.

SMITH: But filiation is very important to most scholars. Why isn't it to you?

KUBLER: What for? What is it important to them for? Filiation.

SMITH: Filiation? A sense of continuity, a sense of alignment, a sense of "This is where I stand. I stand in this camp as opposed to that camp."

KUBLER: Well, I must assume so many points of view that I have no one position.

SMITH: Okay.

KUBLER: A chameleon. A chameleon.

SMITH: But is that accurate, really? Are you really changing your spots, as it were? Your protective coloration?

KUBLER: No. Or perhaps I'm hard to recognize when I change field. I have a chance to start over again. Perhaps that's why I change field rather than always digging the same one.

REESE: So it's a chance to constantly reinvent--

KUBLER: Reinvent. Reinvent or invent other problems.

REESE: --or allow the subject to reinvent.

SMITH: Yet there are continuities, or there seem to be.

KUBLER: There is continuity among them--as we were talking on the street--as of the different kinds of plain architecture.

SMITH: Right.

KUBLER: Which used to be a large topic in twentieth-century thought.

SMITH: But also-- One of the things that really interested me as I was looking through your files was the seminar that you had done on marginalized art, a proseminar. It seemed to be something from the mid-fifties, so you had been already-- A time when it was certainly not fashionable to think about--

KUBLER: The art that's out of fashion.

SMITH: And this was. It was an interesting course because it brought together the pre-Columbian and folk art, not only Latin American but also various European folk arts, the Paleolithic art and African art and Oceanic art. There seemed to be a focus, in looking at the outline, on why these arts become marginal. So what draws you to marginal subjects?

KUBLER: Does marginalized convey the idea of becoming worthless by being marginalized? Is that what you're talking about?

SMITH: No. I don't necessarily think that any of the

arts are worthless.

KUBLER: If a topic becomes marginal, it has been a topic that is deserted by the people that may have been interested in it at one time. I don't understand marginalization very well.

SMITH: Well, yes, but this was a word that you seemed to be using in the fifties to describe-- It was History of Art 108, proseminar: The Marginal Peoples and Their Art.

KUBLER: Well, that's what it meant to me then and what it means to me now. Marginalized, however, is a variable of extreme activity. Marginalizing something means doing something pretty awful to it, such as terminating it. [laughter] Getting it out of view.

SMITH: So that implies that one of your life goals is to bring things into view that are in danger of being "disappeared."

KUBLER: Well, perhaps. Perhaps that describes some of it. Marginalizing then becomes revivifying. I think my intention was to revivify rather than to marginalize. If I used the word incorrectly, it's my fault.

SMITH: Perhaps in terms of the arts that you were describing, they were in fact marginal at that point.

KUBLER: They were already marginal.

SMITH: Yes.

REESE: It's a canon problem, even then, of trying to

reinsert into the study of art history these areas that were not considered by most art historians as part of the corpus of objects and artifacts and cultures to be studied. I would assume that that's what their margins would mean. But, again, Richard was talking about this question of filiation and how you conceive of your work as--

KUBLER: Belonging to a school.

REESE: Or as very decidedly being unto itself. Something that resists in any way clear affiliations, at least if we talk about it with contemporaneous things, because the act of constantly reviving an earlier position and breathing new life into it, or reviving an art work or culture, is another process. But is there a kind of life project? Is there a kind of Kubler project for the history of art that you see as a lifework?

KUBLER: No. I would say that what I do is spontaneous, and I do it when I can between other things if it seems like a good idea.

SMITH: I think part of my questioning that I've been posing to you when I ask you what things have been unresolved in the studies you've done-- What I've been trying to query from you is, to what degree does the partial resolution of a project lead to further work? To what degree does the writing of a book--and the boxing off

in a reasonably satisfactory way of a set of questions--mean that there's another set of questions that's not in the box, and therefore you need to move on? To what degree does your work build from book to book to book? Even if we're talking about different streams or different trains that you get on, that you switch across platforms from time to time.

KUBLER: I think I try to establish a continuous line, a continuous line of effort through many diverse settings. Some topics keep resurfacing, such as plain speaking, plain form, plain shape. There are different ways of tackling it, and I perhaps haven't exhausted them. [laughter]

REESE: But the idea of spontaneity is an interesting line to pursue, because, again, it perhaps reflects my inability to tie you down about the genesis of any specific article, as though I assume somehow that it's part of--

KUBLER: A grand design.

REESE: --some design. And in fact your inability to locate some sense of clear origin for it, you know, is because you see-- You envisioned it as a kind of challenge.

KUBLER: Yes. Or rather a terrain. And it's a terrain that seems to reappear as worth occupying. It's a terrain

that doesn't get exhausted by one or two or three approaches. There's always more to say.

REESE: The territorial dimensions, occupying a terrain as a metaphor, are interesting too, because it can be a totally unexplored area, but it can also be one that needs to be in some way reshaped or recaptured or--

KUBLER: Redefined.

REESE: Redefined.

KUBLER: A lot of art history has that quality of redefinition by different people. It's always being redefined by different people, different approaches.

REESE: Do you find that there are certain scholarly minds, or artistic minds, whose work you feel a kinship with and whose work you always look for when something new appears for the same sense of spontaneity and surprise you're describing? Are there kindred spirits there that you could name or that you think about in that way?

KUBLER: Well, I can think of many people whom I admire for their spontaneity, yes. [laughter]

SMITH: Such as--

KUBLER: Oh, theater folk. Actors are always surprising. [laughter]

REESE: Well, actually, the theatrical metaphor is an interesting one to pursue too, given Betty's and your long-term involvement in theater. The chameleon metaphor,

the spatial metaphor as a terrain of a repertory company--

KUBLER: Yes. People assuming different roles.

SMITH: Did you find that the Yale art history program began to change its voice, the roles that it was assigning to its faculty, after 1970, as younger faculty members came in?

KUBLER: I think so. I can't say that I'm close enough to the department to see what the directions are, but it is a very definitely changing configuration. A changing configuration. Especially with the importance of the role of the women in the department, in the teaching department.

SMITH: With an explicitly feminist outlook on--

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: In your own mind, do you see a role for a feminist perspective in ancient American studies that would be fruitful?

KUBLER: It would be up to them to show it. I would like to think that that might happen. Perhaps Mary Miller will have something to say along those lines about the contribution of women to the study of American antiquity and the difficulty of finding any women in it. There are plenty of women in Maya art and in Aztec art, but they're more mythical than historical.

REESE: Well, I guess Proskouriakoff actually started

feminist studies in a very modest way in her work.

SMITH: Were you concerned about maintaining the ancient American and Iberian studies in the Yale program? Having successors in both fields so that Yale would continue to be known as a center for both fields?

KUBLER: Oh, I think it's very well represented right now with Mary Miller and the new people in anthropology.

SMITH: But I'm wondering if you personally were concerned to make sure that Yale continued as a center for ancient American and Iberian studies or colonial Latin American studies in art history. Not simply in anthropology, but in art history. That the department maintain the legacy that you had established.

KUBLER: Such legacies are better reinvested in other subjects. There are always new subjects needing people and funds, and they can be drawn from the desiccating branches.

REESE: If you were given the opportunity in some way to form a group of five to ten people to embark on a kind of new program for art history in general--? I mean, what kind of a faculty might you think about configuring today? Purely for yourself. In other words, not for teaching, but as a community of scholars in which you would like to be present.

TAPE NUMBER: XV, SIDE ONE

NOVEMBER 19, 1991

REESE: People you knew--

KUBLER: I can't think about people whose existence I don't yet know. I can only think of people whom I know.

SMITH: Well, so let us know. Tell us.

REESE: I'm thinking of not to kind of institutionally continue, but for a period really of now. In other words, in your own work, would it be an interdisciplinary group focusing on problems of art? Would it be a predominantly art historical group? Would it be a cross-cultural configuration? Would it be a cross-methodological configuration? And maybe the best way to do this is not to make it too vague, but to shift it to the work you are doing right now, I mean whatever book project you're kind of envisioning, you know, for the future. Richard said to me you were working or thinking about working on evolution.

KUBLER: Evolution in relation to art history. Art history as an activity in the field of evolutionary thought is demonstrated in the book by Thomas Munro, in which he refused to talk about Darwin--Evolution and the Arts--and he talks about Herbert Spencer. Herbert Spencer is his model. It's not Darwin. His evolutionary model is

Spencer. And that's the only art historical contribution of art.

REESE: Are you now engaged in writing--?

KUBLER: I'm reading about this question.

REESE: Who are the kind of authors and what are the texts that you find right now most engaging?

KUBLER: Well, Colin Martindale and [James] Gleick. [Gleick's] book on chaos [Chaos: Making a New Science] and-- Colin Martindale is knowledgeable about the history of art, and he's concerned to approach quantifying the observations of art historians. He's a social psychologist at University of Maine.

SMITH: We need to discuss your current work, and there are some questions that are raised to me by-- But first I'd like to discuss your retirement and when it occurred. When did you retire?

KUBLER: 'Eighty-three. And at that time it was mandatory.

SMITH: It was mandatory. You mentioned last night that it came as a surprise to you. You mean that suddenly you were faced with retirement without realizing that this was going to happen to you?

KUBLER: Well, it just happened. I hadn't thought of it. I hadn't thought of it, and there it was. [laughter]

SMITH: And then you were told, "Well, this is your last

year, Dr. Kubler, and we've been so glad to have you here"?

KUBLER: Yes. But at the same time that I received that notification, I also was notified that I was being reappointed as a senior research scholar, of which at that time there were four in the university. They draw no salary, but they are allowed to retain their offices and have library privileges and faculty privileges, so that I keep the office. I have no duties, and I have no salary. I have a title, and I'm still in the phone book.

SMITH: When suddenly you realized you were going to be retired and you were going to have a tremendous amount of extra time on your hands, did that affect the kinds of questions you thought you might address?

KUBLER: I began to think about matters that I wouldn't have to teach. Previously I was always considering whether it was teachable. But now I'm drifting away from the history of art to topics that require a great deal of work, such as the history of evolutionary thought.

SMITH: I notice one of the first topics you discuss after you retire-- You begin to delve back into studies in European Paleolithic art, thinking in particular of the eidetic--

KUBLER: Imagery.

SMITH: --imagery. Had your interest in Paleolithic art

been ongoing through the years?

KUBLER: Yes, continuous, and I was always interested in the work of [André] Leroi-Gourhan in France and of his predecessors.

SMITH: That seems another field where you're stepping on the toes of the archaeologists and anthropologists.

KUBLER: Yes. But I'm trying to keep it linked to the history of art.

SMITH: Yet when you write on eidetic imagery ["Eidetic Imagery and Paleolithic Art"], you publish that in the Journal of Psychology, which is in many respects a very big leap for you.

It would seem from the outside a very big leap for you.

KUBLER: I forget how that happened. I think I learned that they would welcome an article on that subject, so I sent it.

SMITH: What kind of studies had you been doing in Gestalt psychology?

KUBLER: Reading. I was aware of the great interest in the twenties, which is where it stayed. [laughter]

SMITH: Where it stayed. Who in particular were you reading?

KUBLER: It's too far back.

SMITH: Well, in terms of art history in particular, I mean, Rudolf Arnheim stands out clearly as a proponent of

Gestalt psychology in the arts, though he's certainly not 1920s.

KUBLER: I haven't read him diligently.

SMITH: What about Ernst Gombrich?

KUBLER: I have read Gombrich more diligently.

SMITH: Did you find Art and Illusion to be an effective book?

KUBLER: I liked it very much.

SMITH: The thing that's curious to me about eidetic imagery and your approach on that is the attempt to find a foundation for figuration in genetics, basically. And when you start talking about art history and Darwinism, I begin to see, "Aha, there's this need to root art history in something as fundamental as the genes."

KUBLER: The gene structure. Maybe. Maybe it can be done. Maybe it's there.

SMITH: Were you satisfied with the eidetic imagery article as a statement of--?

KUBLER: I've read very little comment on that article. I don't know if there is any comment. I have no idea of how it has been received.

SMITH: What about your own personal reception of it as you look back at it and you read it and you say--?

KUBLER: I think it's all right. I think it's all right, but it's probably addressed to the wrong readership in the

Journal of Psychology.

SMITH: Psychologists instead of art historians?

KUBLER: Let's remember a very large family of magazines or journals, of many journals about psychology. Maybe that was the wrong place to put it.

SMITH: You mean there might have been other psychological journals that would have been more--?

KUBLER: There might have been an art historical journal that I should have found that might have taken it to get a response from the art historians.

SMITH: But I wonder if the art historian--

KUBLER: I think it's lost in the Journal of Psychology.

SMITH: I suppose I wonder to what degree the art historian can respond to an attempt to look for the genetic basis or biological basis for art and art history.

KUBLER: Well, that's the question of refocusing the evolutionary aspects of the history of art.

SMITH: You mentioned yesterday that your interest in evolution was-- You said, and this is a quote, you were "going outside art history in order to defend art history."

KUBLER: Yes, I think so. I think that's a statement of hypothesis.

SMITH: Defend art history from what?

KUBLER: Itself.

SMITH: Its current set of assumptions?

KUBLER: Its current set of assumptions, which are unstated in this respect. The only effort to state evolution and the arts is Thomas Munro, Cleveland Museum [of Art], The Aesthetician. Have you ever read it?

SMITH: No, I haven't. I probably will read it when I get back home.

REESE: Yes, because you reviewed that book in about 1960. I can't remember--

KUBLER: No, I never reviewed it, no. I did not review it, no.

REESE: You did not?

KUBLER: It came out in the sixties.

SMITH: So you were mentioning that there were no reviews of the book. It simply came out and disappeared. It was like a black hole.

KUBLER: Thomas Munro's book was almost totally ignored by the art historians. There are a few reviews of it. A few reviews, but they are not very penetrating.

REESE: But it was really a kind of compilation of ideas about evolution.

KUBLER: And all of it directed toward the theory of Herbert Spencer, which is the one that is discarded.

SMITH: I noticed in your folder on [Erwin] Panofsky and evolution, you had [Alfred] Kroeber's article "On the

Principle of Order in Civilization as Exemplified by Changes in Fashion," where he looks at the size of dress hems and lengths, etc., over a 120-year period, as I recall.

KUBLER: It's a fascinating article.

SMITH: Yet one of Kroeber's conclusions is that the pattern that is revealed by looking at these changes over a century plus is that there could not possibly be any human choice involved in these fluctuations. They're too predictable. I wonder how one combines evolution, particularly Darwinian evolution, with its strong emphasis on randomness and the lack of choice, with your strong conviction in the importance of individual choice in every artistic act.

KUBLER: Of course there's a commercial impulse in fashion which has to be taken into account and which is not taken into account. There is no comparative graphic material displaying the state of the market in the relation of fashion to changes in the market. That's the missing link, among many others. A missing link.

REESE: I'm basically trying to go back to Richard's question about looking to science and to biology and to genetics as a terrain for the history of art. I wonder if you can say any more about how that works.

KUBLER: I wish I could. Maybe I can say something next

year. [laughter] [tape recorder off]

SMITH: There are a number of things I wanted to talk about still, one of which is your ideas about myth and ritual, which are very fundamental to so much of what you've studied, possibly from Paleolithic art, certainly in Maya and Teotihuacán, and to a certain degree in the Iberian and colonial studies. And I'm wondering how you view the relationship of myth and ritual and what your kind of operative definition of it is. How do you know when you've seen a myth, and how do you know when you've seen a ritual?

KUBLER: Well, it's an indissoluble union. Ritual without myth is inconceivable, and myth without ritual has no expression.

SMITH: Does art always involve the expression of myth and ritual?

KUBLER: It can. It can be concerned with both.

SMITH: Does it usually, or has it usually?

KUBLER: Not always.

SMITH: What about excluding the modern civilized--?

KUBLER: Well, we'd better talk about art. [laughter]

SMITH: Yes.

KUBLER: What is art. [laughter]

SMITH: Okay.

KUBLER: Is it industrial art?

SMITH: Well--

KUBLER: Is it industrial art?

SMITH: Is it?

KUBLER: Is industrial art concerned with myth or ritual?

SMITH: Well-- [laughter]

KUBLER: Does industrial art mean myth and ritual?

SMITH: Okay, are you talking about basket weaving and pottery as industrial art, or ivory combs?

KUBLER: No, I'm talking about industrial art since the industrial revolution.

SMITH: I think a lot of people would answer your question yes. Perhaps the majority of people who have studied it.

KUBLER: Yes. In other words, it's difficult to exist without the heavenly twins.

SMITH: Well, I don't know if I'd agree with that--

KUBLER: Myth and ritual.

SMITH: Myth and ritual, okay.

KUBLER: But myth without ritual really doesn't exist, or ritual without myth.

SMITH: So you're saying most likely an object involves a relationship to myth and ritual? If you happen upon an object, be it a building or a bowl, an incensario or a lamp produced in Germany in 1929, you can hypothesize a relationship to myth and ritual, and the trick is to discover it?

KUBLER: Well, there are limited definitions of myth-ritual, and there are the expanded definitions of myth-ritual. And one has to be certain about the boundaries, which of the known boundaries of myth and ritual is concerned. Is it going to be early agricultural myth-ritual? Or would it be early pastoral myth-ritual? Or will it be early industrial myth-ritual? Or will it be early space age myth-ritual?

SMITH: But I notice you keep coming back to this word "early," as if early has a special connection to myth and ritual.

KUBLER: I chose the early period, the early for the existence of a life course, the so-called life course. Early, middle, and late industrial. Early, middle, and late preindustrial.

REESE: I think a question that's interesting is, what is the relationship between these three terms, art, ritual, and myth? I mean, can art precede ritual and myth or engender ritual and myth? Have you thought about the kind of nature of the bond between these different items?

KUBLER: Well, I would think that art would do very well without either myth or ritual. It can exist in its own atmosphere. But myth and ritual are possible explanatory efforts.

SMITH: Then would you be sympathetic to John Halverson's

argument that the caves in Lascaux and Altamira perhaps reflect nothing more than an art for art's sake, a jouissance of creative expression?

KUBLER: I would be inclined to think that they do correspond to myth and ritual, we don't know.

SMITH: Well, you as an art historian, when you mention early, pastoral early-- Let's say early hunting and gathering. Those are societies where we have no literary knowledge of myth and ritual, or largely don't--perhaps in some specialized circumstances we do.

KUBLER: Usually it's only from modern survivals.

SMITH: Right.

KUBLER: Australian tribes or--

SMITH: But can the art historian, looking at the objects that have been left behind, make some observations about what the range of myth and ritual was likely to have been? Perhaps you cannot specify to the precise degree that one has when one has a literary text, but can you limit the scope of myth and ritual?

KUBLER: Older students, an older age of students, confidently did so. The present students of cave art, of Paleolithic art, don't risk the assumption.

SMITH: But what about you?

KUBLER: It's difficult enough to describe in a work.

SMITH: Well, what about you?

KUBLER: Well, I'm on the side of the recent restrained efforts to interpret cave art.

SMITH: So that might tend more towards the more precise morphological examination of the works?

KUBLER: It leaves you with morphology, because you have no evidence about the song, the music, the dances that accompanied the work or that were associated with the work, if indeed there were such dances.

SMITH: For instance the famous, perhaps notorious, Venus of Willendorf. How confidently would you say this figure is likely to be a fertility figure?

KUBLER: No confidence at all.

SMITH: So there's nothing in the morphology of the figure that would suggest to you a--

KUBLER: Steatopygia. Steatopygia. [laughter] That's all. Steatopygous. It would be classification. It's a classification of the representation.

SMITH: But as a humanist, you want to go beyond steatopygia and say therefore the human spirit that was obsessed with steatopygia was-- And then make some evaluation.

KUBLER: I don't think we can say we know anything about it until there is some unexpected discovery of an association. An association of a figurine in a demonstrably Paleolithic setting with associations that

are telling of an explanation.

SMITH: Now, I would assume that the assignation of the name--even the name--Venus of Willendorf has some connotations in terms of, shall we say, Freudian psychology and an attempt to derive an absolute sense of what human psychology is. And therefore certain figures, certain morphological forms--

KUBLER: I would never use the name Venus.

SMITH: Right. For the same reason you would never use the word "shaman" to apply to anything outside of Paleosiberian?

KUBLER: In the proper linguistic setting, yes.

SMITH: But, nonetheless, a Freudian psychological interpretation would look at certain forms and say, "Because of what we know about human psychology, therefore we can assume that this appeals to certain libidinous aspects of human nature." And I'm wondering, in terms of your interest in finding a psychological basis to art, how one avoids the pitfalls of a reductive psychological analysis.

KUBLER: By saying very little. By saying very little. [laughter]

SMITH: It's not a word I normally use, but steatop--

KUBLER: Steatopygous. The Greek for "hip."

SMITH: What do you actually say other than what you have

and--?

KUBLER: Fat thighs. A fat-thigh figure.

SMITH: We have a fat-thigh figure. What do you say beyond that? What do those words--?

KUBLER: Female. It's female. It's certainly not male.

SMITH: Can we absolutely be sure about that, given what we know about gender construction nowadays and the berdache tradition in Native American cultures and--?

KUBLER: Possibly it's an extremely fat youth. A fat male youth.

SMITH: Or a Buddha figure?

KUBLER: Buddha figure?

SMITH: Well, if you think about the Buddha figures that one-- You know, the fat.

KUBLER: I'd want to find it in a Buddhist temple, then.

SMITH: Well, actually I don't care if it's a Buddha figure or not. I'm just challenging your certainty that it's a female figure, since I think we can find in Asian art--

KUBLER: Isn't the vulva visible?

SMITH: Even if a vulva is visible, can we be absolutely certain that that's a representation of a vulva, having no associations?

KUBLER: Well, if it isn't a penis, it's got to be a vulva.

SMITH: Well, but we don't know how they represent penises, do we. [laughter] I'm playing devil's advocate now, I'm sorry.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: I mean, we know how they represent phalluses, but do we know how they represent penises, the nonexcited penis?

KUBLER: There are representations of penises in the cave carvings, but the interpretation of the Willendorf figure as a male is very difficult to defend. It would not stand up.

SMITH: Because of the morphology or because of our gender biases?

KUBLER: Because of the anatomy. Because of the anatomical formation.

SMITH: So you think there is, in terms of vision, something that refers to an absolute reality that is independent of ideological construction.

KUBLER: I didn't say that.

SMITH: Are you sure? [laughter] As you know, it's easier to play the devil's advocate than the investigator. I'm not trying to pin you unfairly.

KUBLER: Yes, yes. Surely. Well, bring on another example, another instance. Let's leave Willendorf.

SMITH: Oh. Well, there you get me. [laughter]

KUBLER: Stay in Paleolithic antiquity.

SMITH: I'm not sure. I don't know Paleolithic antiquity that well.

KUBLER: Neither do I. [laughter]

SMITH: What about the effect of codification upon myth and ritual? What does that effect have upon the stereotypicality of representation?

KUBLER: Codification to me means a written register.

SMITH: Yes. Which may or may not be available to us.

KUBLER: A written register of items of a given class.

SMITH: Why does it need to mean a written register? Why could not it be an oral register? For instance, we have--

KUBLER: Codification, all right.

SMITH: --in the book of Genesis many codifications which are oral that were communicated to paper many years after their--

KUBLER: Yes. I'm tempted by the etymology. I think of writing and books and codices and codes, codes which are inscribed on paper, in the older forms of the word.

SMITH: I mean, assuming the most conservative estimate, which is that only Homo sapiens sapiens had language, we still certainly have forty to eighty thousand years of oral culture and only, at best, four to five thousand years of written culture, and really only a literate culture for the last two thousand years of any

significance. So that our sense of humanness rests much more in the oral. Our ability to pass information from generation to generation rests upon oral means rather than written means, so that codification theoretically should be oral.

KUBLER: Signing, simple signing, in Paleolithic art is very common. Making signs, which we don't understand. But there are lots of signs we don't understand. They are part of a code. They're part of a code we don't know.

SMITH: My original question was what kind of effect does codification have, whether oral or written, upon the rates of change of myth and ritual.

KUBLER: I don't know of anyone who has studied this. Do you?

SMITH: No. I wonder-- My question was to find out if you had given any thought to this.

KUBLER: No. [laughter]

SMITH: Yet in The Shape of Time: [Remarks on the History of Things (1962)] and "[Towards a] Reductive Theory of [Visual] Style," there's a principle put forward about how morphology can be examined both synchronically and diachronically at the same time. I'm wondering, given the amount of time you've spent on preliterate cultures, and perhaps the emphasis that you've put on Paleolithic cultures since you're retired, whether you've given this

any thought, even if it's just speculative thought.

KUBLER: Well, the longer one looks at the signs of a human group of whatever age, the more evident it is that there is a code, that they have some meaning, they have some purpose. Simply of numeral strokes numbering the passing livestock. However it may be. One can imagine all sorts of coded marks that fit into an understood code among the people where they occur.

SMITH: That suggests that the triad of art, myth, and ritual is incomplete, that you need to expand it into a tetralogy by adding a codification.

KUBLER: Why not? Nothing against it. There isn't time to try it out.

SMITH: How do we study the rate of change? How do we determine the rate of change? What's the measurement that we can take, particularly with these areas of human history where you don't have objective standards? How do we create--?

KUBLER: Measuring change is a constantly varying task. It's never the same for unmeasured quantities. Quantities that haven't been measured have to be measured by some standard that already exists or a standard that is made for them. The history of measurement is going on constantly. It's a situation in which there are quantities that have never been measured. Appearing to

consciousness and demanding a measure. And we may not have any kind of measure for the phenomenon.

SMITH: Well, for instance, in your study of Paleolithic art, do you have any sense of how you would begin to develop an objective measure of time against Paleolithic art? I mean, it seems to me currently we--

KUBLER: Well, one has the passage of solar time. That's always a useful stick if the event's of that magnitude. You have to name the events and what's to be measured and for what purpose. For sale? For comparison? For general classification of magnitudes? What is the purpose? A study of magnitude? A study of rate? A study of measures themselves? The possibilities are enormous.

SMITH: Your interest in finding a genetic basis to art suggests finding a basis to art that's outside of time, that's absolutely nonhistorical. And yet art passes through--

KUBLER: I wasn't aware of it.

SMITH: No?

KUBLER: No.

SMITH: Are you then saying that the genetic capabilities of human beings are also a historical phenomenon?

KUBLER: Probably. Probably. They have appeared at some remote time in the last million years, or a hundred million.

SMITH: In absolute terms of course they're historical. But in terms of human action as we know it, if there's a genetic base, that genetic base would provide a synchronic base for all human activity.

KUBLER: The events are happening independently of human genetics, I presume. The events you are talking of are outside the human means of perception. They are not part of the organism.

SMITH: The finished object is not part of the organism.

KUBLER: No.

SMITH: But the act that-- There's a possibility that the act that leads to what we now in the twentieth century call art is part of the human organism, is an ineffable part of the human organism.

KUBLER: Ineffable.

SMITH: Ineffable. Inescapable.

KUBLER: Unspeakable.

SMITH: Yes. Unspeakable. Fundamental.

KUBLER: That's a very good word. Unspeakable. Ineffable.

REESE: But of course evolution would be the key concept, right, to fill in the gaps between the genetic system and its evolution towards-- Right? A set of reactions to concrete needs and concrete conditions externally, so that the evolution of cognition, per se, could fit in the kind

of field of studies you're doing of evolution.

KUBLER: Well, my studies of evolution are minuscule and merely begun. I know very little about evolutionary theory, but I'm trying to find out.

SMITH: I guess what puzzles me, or not puzzles me in a problematic sense, but only in the sense of to understand the direction you're going in and where you've been coming from, is why you feel evolution is so important.

KUBLER: I'm trying to think of a way to connect--

TAPE NUMBER: XV, SIDE TWO

NOVEMBER 19, 1991

SMITH: Why Darwin and why not Spencer? What's wrong with Spencer, what's good about Darwin?

KUBLER: Well, the biological work confirming Darwin is of impressive character. There is no confirmation of Herbert Spencer. No confirmation of Herbert Spencer's theory of evolution, but the only work discussing this is Thomas Munro's, and that's dedicated to crediting evolutionary theory to Herbert Spencer rather than to Charles Darwin, whom he rarely mentions and only in passing.

SMITH: Now, you'll have to excuse me, because my understanding is that Spencer is a Darwinian, but of a peculiar sort.

KUBLER: He is pre-Darwinian. He is pre-Darwinian, and they knew of each other, but Spencer's ideas were circulating before Darwin's. I think that is what induced Thomas Munro to prefer Spencer.

REESE: Now, it's interesting to me in your career how you will in fact look through these very different kinds of hypotheses as a means of exploring possibilities. For example, you know, The Shape of Time was so absolutely concerned with, in fact, a critique of biological metaphors and biology as the basal, a frame through which

one dealt with art favoring instead the physical sciences. And yet in some way there must have been some unfinished business there for you that has led you back again to reexamine concepts deeply rooted within biology. I just wonder whether you're aware of certain kinds of questions and forces that lead you from, say, physical science, not as an explanatory concept but a concept which helps open thought-- Then the return to biological science is a way that can also open thought.

KUBLER: Well, it would be very strange if happenings in the history of art were exempt from evolutionary process. It would be very strange. The assumption in most art historical writing from the beginning to the present is that there is no connection with evolutionary thought, with evolutionary change. That seems improbable, that it should be exempt from evolutionary change, that its study should be conducted without reference to evolutionary change.

REESE: But in earlier work--I'm talking about The Shape of Time--there seemed to be a real impulse to free art as a realm from in some way being an illustration of either science or metaphor. Yet in this recent work that we're talking about both on imagery and on evolution, there seems to be a kind of reopening of the question that would easily allow one to say, "But is not art then simply

becoming part of a configuration that's generating it by some system bigger than art?" In other words, I just wonder how you deal today with this relationship of art as a kind of way of sensing and knowing the universe and these larger systems which you are now interested in exploring.

KUBLER: Do you know of a book by Colin Martindale [The Clockwork Muse: The Predictability of Artistic Change]?

REESE: I have not read it, but I've looked at it briefly here.

KUBLER: Yes. Well, he's engaged in quantifying artistic change or literary change or the change in human production, quantifying it in a series of equations that can be applied to the history of change.

SMITH: But, again, with that and with Kroeber's article on fashion and dress design, there's a probabilistic element involved which explicitly challenges any role for human choice. So how do you reconcile within your own conception of art this role of choice and necessity?

REESE: Or problem solving and necessity?

KUBLER: Well, it would be a very strange assumption to exempt the making of art, to suppose that the history of art is free of evolutionary change in the biological sense.

SMITH: But evolutionary change, as I understand it, is

not predetermined. It is random selection. If we skip over to this other book that you mentioned earlier, Chaos, and the new development in 1980s physics in terms of--

KUBLER: Gleick's book.

SMITH: Gleick's book. Instead of imagining the fundamental physical universe as being orderly, as, say, both relativity and quantum mechanics does, we imagine a universe in which there is no probabilistic certainty. There is the randomness of a chaotic situation constantly throwing forth patterns.

KUBLER: Well, the adoption of the term "chaos" by its proponents is a piece of publicity to make it interesting. Actually, it is a very disciplined effort to give a mathematical account of what happens in change, situations of change. And this group of mathematicians have devised a number of equations permitting them to explain change.

REESE: So change ultimately is the subject always that interests you. And then change through time--

SMITH: Disjunction.

KUBLER: The studies are concerned, both of them really, with change. Martindale and Gleick's journalistic report on what these mathematicians are doing. These people are all concerned with change.

SMITH: Change, but from a point of view of continuity.

And your point of view has tended to be disjunction.

KUBLER: Well, it can be disjunction. Disjunction is one of its forms.

REESE: But also it's interesting that this concern with origins also has become essential, has been returned to the fore--to go back to the beginnings, in some ways to the origins of cognition, of communication, of thought.

SMITH: I'm going to shift the subject a little bit.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: It relates to the question of myth and ritual. You mentioned in one of your writings that historians of religion were important to you because they were not after the belief alone. It was one of your aperçus--

KUBLER: I don't remember where I said this.

SMITH: It's in the collected essays, but I would have to hunt for it. My question was more, in terms of historians of religion, who has been particularly important to you in terms of trying to understand the function of art in various societies, whether it's Catholic Spain and Portugal or Mesoamerican, ancient American societies. Or Paleolithic society, with a possible religion that we can only speculate about.

KUBLER: I don't believe I've ever got much comfort from historians of religion. [laughter]

SMITH: There's nobody that's been particularly

significant to you?

KUBLER: I don't think I've read much history of religion.

SMITH: Have you read Eliade? Mircea Eliade?

KUBLER: I've known and disliked his work, yes.

SMITH: Why do you dislike his work?

KUBLER: I don't believe it.

SMITH: Why don't you believe it?

KUBLER: It doesn't connect with anything I know. Mircea Eliade is a rhapsodist of history, and he invents histories.

SMITH: Invents?

KUBLER: He makes up history. He produces histories.

SMITH: Without your conception of what adequate basis?

KUBLER: I don't see what he produces as history, as being history. It's an imaginary excursion by Mircea Eliade through what he believes is history.

SMITH: What about, if we think in terms of anthropology, Mary Douglas's perspectives?

KUBLER: I don't know her work. She has become quite influential in the last twenty years with an anthropology of religion. No, I haven't read her.

SMITH: She has written on Mesoamerican religion.

KUBLER: I haven't read her.

SMITH: Okay.

KUBLER: Do you mention her in the same context with

Mircea Eliade?

SMITH: She's become quite influential of late.

KUBLER: And for the same reasons?

SMITH: Well, I don't know if they're for the same reasons. [laughter]

KUBLER: This web of fantasy?

SMITH: She views religion as the fundamental human characteristic, the need to unite with the divine. To heal the separation that exists from being a material creature. So she is herself religious. She's a devout Catholic and views religion-- I don't know if that fits Eliade, but she views religion as fundamental to the human existential situation.

KUBLER: Well, I wouldn't accept her as a historian. Nor would I accept Mircea as a historian.

SMITH: Okay, what about someone who was at Yale [University], and may still actually be at Yale, Jaroslav Pelikan?

KUBLER: He is a historian. And he is a historian of religion. I accept him as a historian.

REESE: The term you use-- "He's a rhapsodist." How do you define the rhapsodist? Is it in a certain kind of--?

KUBLER: Getting involved with inexplicable things through the use of a poetic sort of language. But in the process losing contact with history, the history that is

supposedly being written.

SMITH: How would you define the difference between poetic language and aphoristic language?

KUBLER: Poetic diction is highly evocative. Aphoristic convinces me. Doesn't expand it. The aphorism is a shortcut.

SMITH: We talked about Chaos a little bit, but more fundamental to much of your work for the last twenty years was your taking up the concept of complementarity from quantum mechanics. I understand--correct me if I'm wrong --that your understanding of complementarity was derived largely from Gerald Holton's article "The Roots of Complementarity."

KUBLER: That's right. And it's no deeper than that.

SMITH: No deeper than that. His particular presentation had resonance for you.

KUBLER: It was timely for me. It's what I was reading then.

SMITH: In 1970, when you read it, why did you feel that complementarity had particular application to the humanities?

KUBLER: I'll have to go back over the passage.

SMITH: The work itself?

KUBLER: Uh-huh.

REESE: Well, the immediate context was the two rival

views of anthropologists and art historians, and that both could be simultaneously true rather than exclusively--

KUBLER: Yes. Well, I'd still accept that.

SMITH: I have perhaps a broader question, which is the role and the dangers of metaphors as cognitive maps.

KUBLER: The role and the dangers--

SMITH: I mean, complementarity is a metaphor. It's a metaphor even when it's applied to physics. And when you lift a metaphor out of physics to apply to another field, it becomes meta-metaphorical, it seems to me.

KUBLER: The danger. I agree.

SMITH: And there seems to me in your thinking, the way you express yourself, a constant tension between finding the right aphoristic expression--which often involves a metaphor--and not being trapped by the limits of the metaphor, which is, after all, using one thing to express another thing.

KUBLER: All those are the defects of rhetoric. Of my rhetoric.

REESE: And the value. [laughter]

SMITH: I noticed in my perusal of your files that Louis Hjemslev's theory of linguistics seemed to have a particular--

KUBLER: Hjemslev.

SMITH: The Danish linguist. I was wondering, how does

one translate language-based models to visual phenomena or to--? I mean, many people no longer think of art as visual but as manipulative, in the original sense of manipulative, something that's handcrafted.

KUBLER: Now, this is getting very complicated.

SMITH: Oh. Okay.

KUBLER: Language-based models.

SMITH: Well, you've used linguistics, semiotics. How do you translate those? What are the limits to the translation of a verbal-based model to a phenomenon which, whether one views it as visual in orientation or manipulative in orientation, is still nonetheless non-verbal? You're dealing with a form of human activity that has an existence independent of words. How do you take a model that you've used productively that grows out of words and translate it to phenomena that are independent of words, that exist without reference to words?

KUBLER: In the visual domain.

SMITH: Yes, in the visual domain.

KUBLER: What is there in the visual domain that would take the place of words? In other words, words can be used to approach visual experience by describing it in the manner of words. This seems an unavoidable procedure. How does one avoid it? Is it reprehensible? What am I to do with it?

SMITH: Well, if we take as a fundament of linguistics the voiced/unvoiced phenomenon, does that have a parallel in the visual domain? The voiced/unvoiced meaning the difference between b and p.

KUBLER: That I haven't thought about, the parallel between b and p and visual experience. I would suppose that a confusion of one form for another, one visual form for another corresponding visual experience, as to confusion between b and p.

SMITH: And we know from Gestalt--

KUBLER: A line that is seen as a shadow or a shadow that is seen as a line. That sort of confusion is common.

SMITH: Or foreground and background distinctions.

KUBLER: Yes. Versions of foreground and background.

REESE: Of course, the validity of the tool for the art historian would work in reverse. Not to ask what is the analogue of the voiced/unvoiced, but what are the visual phenomena that might be elucidated, furthered by, you know, looking for that other analogue elsewhere. Rather than say, "Let's start with the analogue in another discipline and find its illustration in art." It's a reversal of grounds.

SMITH: I mentioned Hjemslev because for him the fundamental basis of language was the difference between b and p. It seemed that you were reading him extensively in

some of your classes.

KUBLER: I don't remember reading him.

SMITH: Really? [laughter] Okay. I'd like to explore some of the things in terms of-- Did you read much of [Charles S.] Peirce?

KUBLER: At one time. Semiologist.

SMITH: Yes. Or psychologist, depending on how you slice him. Did you find his work motivating?

KUBLER: Yes. Stimulating. I didn't work with it long.

SMITH: Do you remember what you were working on specifically when you were reading Peirce? When you might have been reading him and what projects it connected with?

KUBLER: It may have been The Shape of Time. Peirce's work is of the early part of the century.

SMITH: Actually, nineteenth century. What about William James?

KUBLER: I did read him at one time.

SMITH: Was that useful?

KUBLER: Less.

SMITH: Less. What about John Dewey?

KUBLER: Even less. I don't remember mentioning him anywhere.

SMITH: Skipping over to a whole other philosophical tradition, did you read any Kierkegaard?

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: Was that useful at all?

KUBLER: I don't remember it as such.

SMITH: I'm wondering, to what degree did existential or phenomenological philosophy help you in terms of clarifying your thoughts?

KUBLER: I never applied to it for clarification.

SMITH: But I did notice--this is the problem of sneaking through people's files--that in your History 100A notes, a significant amount of that class was devoted to the study of Kant: the three critiques and Kant's philosophy of the psychology of man. These were notes that appeared to come from the mid-1950s. So you had spent a considerable time grappling with Kant, it would appear.

KUBLER: I did indeed.

SMITH: Tom, when you were in the methodology class, did classical philosophy still have a major role?

REESE: Well, I didn't take a class where George was teaching methodology of the history of art. But rather within the field of, let's say, pre-Columbian art, we were looking at methodology in a much more concrete frame.

SMITH: I see.

REESE: The work that had been produced on the interpretation of Teotihuacán. The methodology course by that time was taught I think by [Egbert Haverkamp-]Begemann when I was there.

KUBLER: I think we did it together for a while.

REESE: But I think methodology classes are always a remarkable way to explore the relationship, you know, of your condition as an art historian, too.

KUBLER: Yes.

REESE: You know, the past of art history into other realms.

KUBLER: And it has to be done without extended remarks because of the lack of time.

SMITH: You had mentioned several times that you are not a philosopher.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: Or you have an aphoristic style because you are not capable of extended philosophic exposition.

KUBLER: That's probably correct.

SMITH: I'm still curious how much philosophy you've tried to wrestle with in the past. How much classical philosophy.

KUBLER: I've tried to be informed when I thought that it would be useful in instruction.

SMITH: Okay, so it was instruction oriented.

KUBLER: Yes. For purposes of instruction.

SMITH: Have you tried to reconstruct the history of the aesthetic?

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: In what areas do you feel philosophy of aesthetics has not been satisfactory for the understanding of or the definition of artistic practice?

KUBLER: Well, in most of the writings that are independently regarded as forming the body of aesthetics, the aesthetics that have always interested me are those of everyday experience, the necessity for the aesthetic experience of anything in terms of pain and pleasure. Is it painful? Is it pleasurable?

REESE: And ultimately aesthetics, I guess, as a Western tradition itself, is something that warrants constant challenge from those looking at objects outside that tradition. So that that becomes the challenge, too.

KUBLER: The meaning of an expression that I want to use--I find myself spending a good deal of time tracing out that meaning in the source from which it came, and that's often the limit of my experience of an author, rather than reading systematically through the lifework of that author.

SMITH: So while you're trying to solve a problem--

KUBLER: I find ways of short-circuiting access to the formulation I want.

SMITH: My next question, actually, was the degree to which you balance some of the basic concepts that have been part of your oeuvre: disjunction, bricolage,

complementarity--

KUBLER: Is that all?

SMITH: No, there are quite a few others, actually. [laughter] But to what degree do they form a system of thought?

KUBLER: Not at all. Those are words floating on the surface.

SMITH: So the system lies deeper. If you use that metaphor, then we need to drop down another level or two to find where the Kubler system exists. Or are you suggesting there is no Kubler system?

KUBLER: Well, I have a way of writing, and I don't think of it as a system. It's the way I write.

REESE: Well, ultimately, the basic underlying message of The Shape of Time, right, is that any work by him is in some way a reaction to problems, very concrete problems, because by whatever we call it, the subject matter-- That's not the correct term, but a set of problems so that-- I mean, if one were to say that your work as a scholar is ultimately dictated by the subject matter and the problems that are inherent to the particular problem you choose, do you feel that that's accurate? Or do you feel there is this other more systematic enterprise that Richard is referring to?

KUBLER: Well, I'm at a loss to define my system if I have

one. And what I've written is what I've written.

SMITH: I suppose what we're asking really, and this is sort of an impertinent question-- What is the ambition here? What degree of explanation are you searching for?

KUBLER: Usually to be understood by a student or students.

SMITH: But beyond that. For some art historians the problem is nothing other than "Let us make sure that we've got the date of the painting to a matter of months and that we have the placement of panels in a sequence of paintings. If we have a multi-panel painting, we make sure the panels are in correct order." That doesn't seem to be the sort of level of problem that you're interested in, though you may need to comment on those sorts of things.

KUBLER: Yes, one has to. I've tried to provide convenient and accessible explanations of my understanding of the works of art that I have most frequently studied and to explain those things to my hearers by means of a lecture.

SMITH: I'm wondering whether you could just outline for us what-- You've talked a little bit about the evolution and art history project, what the likely future projects are that you're going to be dealing with. What are the ideas?

KUBLER: I have no idea what more there is. I have this one in prospect, and it will take me a long time.

SMITH: And there are no other projects that are--

KUBLER: The placing of the history of art in evolutionary theory. That will take me a long time.

SMITH: And there are no other things that are beckoning to you as well that you feel a need to pursue.

KUBLER: Not yet. I doubt that I will finish this one.

SMITH: Really. You think it will take quite a long time to do properly?

KUBLER: Well, I'm going on eighty. I haven't much time. I don't expect to do very much more, but I'll try.

REESE: What kind of pressures do you feel under when you are talking about "I don't have much time"? I mean, do you feel that in fact your approach to the work somehow becomes different or that you proceed pretty much as you have?

KUBLER: Oh, I do it at the usual pace at which I work and in the way I usually work. I will do it in that way and it will come out resembling the rest of my work. It won't be resembling anything else but what I have done before.

REESE: But do you think of priorities in a different way, in terms of the classes of problems you want to deal with?

KUBLER: Well, I think this topic that we've been discussing of the relation of the history of art to

evolutionary theory is a workable suggestion. I think it can be opened up to bring the history of art into line with the principles of Darwinian evolutionism.

TAPE NUMBER: XVI, SIDE ONE

NOVEMBER 20, 1991

SMITH: I noticed in your files you have some of the archives of Paul Frankl.

KUBLER: Yes.

SMITH: We had not really discussed him before. I would like you to just tell us about your relationship with him and how you came to have a portion of his archives.

KUBLER: I didn't know him well. At the time he first came to the country with his wife, he had this manuscript which he wished to be published. And he died. I told his wife that I would keep the manuscript and let her know if I found any way to get it published. It was in German, and it would have required translation. Did you look at it?

SMITH: No, I didn't really look at it.

KUBLER: Something happened to her. I don't know whether she died, but I never heard from her again. So there it is in my drawer. I haven't really read the manuscript, although I've read his books. But I leafed through the manuscript, and it didn't seem to say anything importantly new.

SMITH: Then another, I think, quick thing is you also have a rather extensive file on your relationship with

Dumbarton Oaks.

KUBLER: Well, I was on the board there and I was a fellow there. I spent a lot of time and I'd go to the galleries.

SMITH: Do you feel that, as a board member, you had much influence on decisions that they made?

KUBLER: No. I participated in the discussions, but I wasn't ever asked to do any administrative tasks. I was always there as a scholar and as a board member.

SMITH: How important has it been to you, or was it to you at various points in your life, to see the consolidation of institutions devoted to the study of ancient American art in the United States? Have you devoted any energy to that?

KUBLER: Well, Dumbarton Oaks was a case, because that section was one of four. They are of equivalent status. They are separate organizations in faculties and libraries, and all housed in the same property. Very beautiful gardens and a marvelous library of landscape architecture. A Byzantine section, a pre-Columbian section, landscape architecture, those are the three principal ones.

SMITH: Then I also noticed--I thought this was quite interesting, but I think again we can treat it very quickly--that among the assignments you seemed to give your students were translations. In particular, I noticed

there were several students who translated from various works of [Claude] Lévi-Strauss. I presume you were doing these before the English translations were commercially available in the U.S. What was your motivation in asking students to prepare these translations?

KUBLER: I've really forgotten this. I don't recognize it. I don't recognize myself there. Why would I do that? Asking them to translate? From what languages?

SMITH: French primarily, into English.

KUBLER: Not from Náhuatl or--?

SMITH: No. These were more theoretical texts. There was a chapter from The Savage Mind, from La Pensée sauvage. There was a chapter from Structural Anthropology, "Split Representation in American and Asian Art," that you had what looked like a graduate student translate.

KUBLER: It may have been a decision by the student to make the translation.

SMITH: And then submit it to you?

KUBLER: And submit it, yes. That's all I can think of. But I don't remember demanding or requiring, as part of the student's work, translation. No. I wouldn't do that.

SMITH: When we left off last night, we were discussing somewhat about eidetic imagery. After we finished taping, you began to talk about your own vision as being eidetic. I wonder if you could talk about how you personally see

and what you learned about the psychology of vision from doing that study.

KUBLER: Well, it has a great deal to do with the relationship of the mind to the object. People with eidetic vision have very different capacities. Some of them, remarkably, extended over the persistence of the image in time. All of this is interesting in relation to the endowment of the visual artist. The presence of eidetic vision is probably more common among professional artists than it is among the rest of the population. There's a possible professional advantage to the possession of the faculty that some artists have over others. The ability to extract meaning from eidetic imagery. Persistent imagery.

SMITH: Prior to doing this study, were you aware that your vision was eidetic, that you had an eidetic form of vision?

KUBLER: Well, I'd always been aware of it, especially in a half-light, less than the light in this room. It's congenital. I think it's congenital. A lot of people are totally unaware of it. I don't know if either of you is aware of your own eidetic capacity. Are you aware of it?

SMITH: I don't think I have eidetic--

KUBLER: Do you think you have it?

REESE: You know, I'm not sure.

KUBLER: It's present in about 20 percent of the population. It's been studied very intensively in the twentieth century.

SMITH: In doing the research for that article, "Eidetic Imagery and Paleolithic Art," which is rather brief, what kinds of readings were you doing that might not have appeared in the final version of the article?

KUBLER: Anything I could find.

SMITH: So you looked at psychological studies?

KUBLER: I looked up the topic in the appropriate literatures.

SMITH: Did you discover something about the nature of cognition and perception that you had not known before?

KUBLER: Not really, but what really impressed me was its universality among human beings. Some human beings everywhere are eidetic subjects. Many of them don't know it. I didn't know about it until I began to think about it. I began to think about it about ten years ago. But I never cultivated it. [laughter]

SMITH: Did you begin to think about it because somebody asked you to think about it?

KUBLER: No. I thought that it might be significant to visual studies. Studies of visual subjects. Highly visual subjects.

SMITH: Do you see a connection between that kind of study

into eidetic imagery and the psychology of vision, with your current work on evolution and art?

KUBLER: Not really, no. It would be interesting to know about animal eidetic vision, but I don't think it's possible to study it, how widely spread is it in the animal kingdom.

SMITH: In the folder that you gave me pertaining to this, there was an article by John Halverson from Current Anthropology, "Art for Art's Sake in the Paleolithic." One of the things I noted that he wrote was that the artist or the individual with eidetic vision is able to see things in a way that's "unmediated by cultural tradition, ideology, or reflection." Would you agree with that?

KUBLER: Yes. This is in a sense a negative of what one sees. It's a shape, and it's usually of a contrasting value to the surrounding light. It's almost a negative of the image. Under certain lighting conditions, it is strongly a negative of the positive we see, but reduced to light and dark. And the best screen is the ceiling. In bed. [laughter]

REESE: So one looks at an object and then looks elsewhere and sees its reflection as--

KUBLER: And then you can see it in bed on the screen over your head for a limited time. It fades quickly.

SMITH: Then there was also in that file a comment by Whitney Davis from the art history department at UC [University of California] Berkeley. He talks of the goal of attempting to imagine "inchoate cultural and psychological states." Is that something that you are grasping towards, to try to see "inchoate cultural states"?

KUBLER: No, I don't share that with Whitney Davis. One has eidetic images of only retinal impressions, not of ideas. Ideas have no reality in eidetic projection. [laughter]

SMITH: Aha. So that's--

KUBLER: It's entirely visual. It's entirely of the eye. Of the retina.

SMITH: That would explain-- You had handwritten in a note at that point saying, "Meaning is the final question to be approached." "Meaning" presumably being the same as the idea. Is there a connection between morphology and the retinal?

KUBLER: I don't know what I had in mind when I wrote that marginal meaning. Perhaps I wanted to determine with Whitney Davis the meaning. [laughter] Meaning to be determined? Is that it?

SMITH: Meaning as a final question to be approached.

KUBLER: Yes. The meaning of eidetic vision.

SMITH: Or possibly the meaning of an image, the meaning imputed to an image.

KUBLER: The semantic value of an eidetic image. I think that's what I had in mind.

SMITH: But you do see a possible split between image and meaning, between form and semantics.

KUBLER: Yes. The image is there, and one can endow it. One can give it meaning. Or one can relate it to the rest of experience, other experience. So it does serve as a token, the eidetic image.

SMITH: I'd like to move on to some more speculative kinds of questions.

KUBLER: This wasn't speculative enough?

SMITH: No, not at all! One is, I mentioned last night that we might talk about the role of analogy, metaphor, and possibly allegory in historical explanation. How do you try to use these rhetorical forms without surrendering to them? In one of your essays, when you talk about specialization of time, you use the analogy of a snail remembering the--

REESE: Transduction.

SMITH: Transduction, right.

KUBLER: The processes you mention are literary processes, and literary processes are the result of long traditions of literary practice and literary speculation. So that

it's part of the domain of literary criticism, and those terms are all literature. Allegory. Metaphor. What else?

SMITH: Analogy.

KUBLER: Analogy. That escapes the literary net. What else?

SMITH: Well, those were the three that I mentioned.

KUBLER: Essentially those are literary processes one can study separately and together, with most tradition being from the study of literature. They are pretty much confined to literature, aren't they? Allegory.

SMITH: Well, there's the question of whether history is also inevitably part of literature. There's the debate over whether history can be nomothetic or whether its form of knowledge is limited by the fact that it is a narrative.

KUBLER: It is. Historical writing is a literary category using literary devices, no question.

SMITH: How important is narrative explanation to you as a historian?

KUBLER: Well, it's the easiest mode of discourse, things in the flow of time. The easiest way to present them. But it's more fun to tear them apart, to take them apart. [laughter] Take the continuity of time apart.

SMITH: Well, to take an analogy, an important analogy is

the comparison that you have made between European and Latin American antiquity, middle ages, and renaissance, modern-- In terms of your own self-critique of that comparison, what are the gaps that you had to accept in order to develop and use a pattern of this nature, and how do you try to limit the dangers of an overly facile use of an analogy?

KUBLER: Well, I try to examine the properties of the field of study. If it's a colonial situation, that's very different from the precolonial situation or the postcolonial situation. So there's a different domain. One examines them differently and treats them differently as to how to write about the period. One doesn't write about one period in the same way as one writes about another period.

SMITH: I'd like to shift to the question of the prime object. To get a sense of your view of the prime object, I started thinking about many art historians' vision of the avant-garde. You have written briefly on that, but if we were to take a very traditional view of the development of nineteenth- and twentieth-century painting, could one consider Courbet, Cézanne, Picasso, and Pollock to each be examples of prime objects? Or their paintings, of course.

KUBLER: I would say no. What I was thinking of with this notion was something like a black hole, a point of energy.

A point of energy, of power, of some power. Like a black hole. Black holes are doubtful, black holes are hard to see, and prime objects haven't really been found. [laughter] Perhaps they've deteriorated. Perhaps they've vanished already or never existed. But the prime object, I think, exists in the shadow of a black hole. Where is it? How many are there? Where are they? What's in them? Perhaps nothing.

SMITH: Well, then, still there is the question of how one might apply the principle that you developed out of looking at a millennia-long tradition to questions that are only decades long, perhaps even contemporary concerns.

KUBLER: Well, there are objects that are like points of great energy. There are objects one can identify as attracting energy. But that's a different approach to the same idea.

SMITH: When you wrote on the vanguard in art ["Comment on Vanguard Art"], that was for a conference that you were invited to participate in.

KUBLER: Yes, I think so. I think it was the meeting of an academy.

SMITH: It's the only thing that I've seen of yours where you write even in an oblique way about twentieth-century or contemporary art. Are there other things that you've written that relate to--?

KUBLER: Well, I often think about it while I'm writing and use analogies and illustrations and so on. It's part of the continuum.

SMITH: So do you keep abreast of developments in contemporary art?

KUBLER: It's very difficult not to. [laughter] One lives in it.

REESE: Can we go back to prime objects for a second?

KUBLER: Sure.

REESE: As I've read you readdress this question of prime objects, and I've heard you readdress it, what interests me is the way in which in retrospect you enjoy so much the very ambiguity. In fact, as you get more distant, you enjoy even more the ambiguous possibilities of this original concept.

KUBLER: It doesn't grow more precise. It has more and more kinds of meaning.

REESE: Did you at the very beginning think about it in terms of its potential ambiguity? Or did you think of it at the point of origin as being something a little closer to defining something more concrete?

KUBLER: The first rather than the second, yes. It was deliberately of multiple possibility.

REESE: Do you think that's also something that is true about some of these analogues and metaphors that Richard

was asking about? That it is in fact not their precision, but rather their suggestiveness.

KUBLER: Their field of suggestion, yes, or their power of suggestion.

SMITH: The other topic that I told you I wanted to talk about was whether there were topics or perhaps even manuscripts, aside from the Tikal-- Books that you would have liked to have published but did not because it did not seem practical at the time for one reason or another or you could not interest a publisher. I'm wondering about the paths that you did not take at various points in your career, yet these were subjects that had a strong appeal to you.

KUBLER: Well, I'd have to give that some thought, and rummaging around in my papers to find abandoned trails. I can't offhand remember them, but there are I think a number. How many I don't know. [laughter]

REESE: These are the prime objects.

KUBLER: Studies contemplated but not begun, or studies begun but abandoned.

SMITH: To what degree might the factors have been practical, in terms of financing or travel or needing cooperation from governments that you might not be able to get?

KUBLER: Well, I don't think that there was that kind of

discouragement. I think usually I would abandon the project because I got tired of it.

SMITH: Because the problem was too easily solved or too difficult to solve? [laughter]

KUBLER: It wasn't going anywhere. If it wasn't yielding to further invitation, better abandon it. [laughter]

REESE: One of the bodies of research that I remember in your office were the files with the enormously detailed notations of colonial manuscript illuminations.

KUBLER: Yes. Oh, yes.

REESE: Which were, if I remember, thousands of cards, drawings of motifs and iconographical themes.

KUBLER: Those were teaching aids, I think. And I did that a lot. I did that a lot, making indexed files that could be used. I started an ambitious study of Mochica pottery, and I did it that way. I collected a lot of examples and classified them and thought about them. And the topic is much better handled in a different way, which is field archaeology, because these objects come from a limited number of sites and the extent of that culture is much larger. And now, in effect, after twenty years or thirty years, it's much better known and in much greater detail, with some brilliant archaeologists in charge, like Chris [Christopher B.] Donnan, whom you know, and others. The West Coast is the place where one should be to study

Mochica pottery.

REESE: It's interesting, as I listen to you talk, it dawns on me that that earlier method, of course, was the method of Mexican Architecture of the Sixteenth Century, of many of the other early works. It charted the entire corpus of production and really thinking about how to classify and treat its development in a series of different slices. Was there a time for you in which that enterprise seemed to lose steam, or was it that your interest simply shifted elsewhere? Was it a questioning of that larger systematizing enterprise? Or was it just that, you know, you might prefer a different scale of enterprise, cut through the materials--?

KUBLER: Well, one can grow tired of a method, and this enumerative method is tiresome. So one changes method. Other methods are more amusing.

SMITH: I was reading the vanguard art article this morning, rereading it. Of course, Thomas Munro's name appears in there. So it struck me this is someone who's been gnawing on you for a good twenty-five years now.

KUBLER: What did I say in this particular context? It's just a mention of the name?

SMITH: It's just a mention of the name. But also the importance of looking at evolution.

KUBLER: Yes. Well, Thomas Munro has been a much cited

and much read writer and regarded as the dean of the aestheticians.

SMITH: But I was wondering, actually, to get back to the question of methodologies, if you could talk about the methodology that you're thinking through, that you're planning on using for this study of art history and evolution.

KUBLER: Oh, I'm going to leave art history as it is. I'm not going to change anything about art history. I'm going to take art history as it is. Here it is functioning without a concept of evolutionary theory. In the absence of evolutionary concern. This is very strange. Thomas Munro is the only person to write extensively about it, using the wrong books. [laughter] Have you seen his big book? A five-hundred-page book on evolution and art?

REESE: Yes, I do know it. I read it a great deal in the mid-sixties.

KUBLER: Yes. It's a deadly book.

SMITH: I noticed in your "Comment on Vanguard Art--" Let me quote something: "Does evolution alter those thrifty, crafty ways of artists whose brief span allows them barely time to turn around within two or three good ideas? Human art fits within the evolutionary framework as well as within quantum mechanics or an expanding universe of quasars. But neither evolution nor astrophysics can

supply an adequate account of the history of the works of art." So this is a statement that you made in '69, and it sounds like you've moved beyond that, in a sense--that now you're questioning that there must be some connection between evolution and art history.

KUBLER: Art history is outside the present world in its professed ignorance of evolutionary theory. So it seems to me that that's a gap, a gap that is worth plugging.

REESE: Do you have any sense that part of your interest in this in fact is to show that art history might, in a fundamental way, transform our knowledge of evolution?

KUBLER: Be an instrument of evolutionary knowledge, yes. Very much so. Because it's on a very fine time scale. A very short time scale.

SMITH: So that art history would open up the discussion of evolution rather than evolution clarify our knowledge of art?

KUBLER: That could be a result. Yes. For art historians to think in an evolutionary fashion.

REESE: So the same way that eidetic imagery could perhaps be a clue to-- Or that artists could become a clue to the understanding of a comprehensive kind of vision--

KUBLER: In their operations they are behaving as subjects of evolution--in evolution. In evolution.

REESE: So in some way that project of George Kubler--

KUBLER: Personal evolution.

REESE: But that project of George Kubler, which is in many ways to define ways in which the history of art has a kind of fundamental way of knowing the world--can elucidate all those other realms--has always been there.

KUBLER: Yes. Always, yes. Yes. That's why I stayed. [laughter] That's why I stayed at the end. [tape recorder off]

REESE: One of the questions that I wanted to ask concerns the relationship, really, of teaching methodology in your career and the nature of your own work. In other words, how important teaching the historiography or methodology class, you know, has been to your own art history.

KUBLER: Well, I always made it a principle to have the students as equal participants in the enterprise, meaning that they were to write and to speak about what they were writing on an equal footing with me. So that those who did not wish to participate in that form of instruction rapidly dropped out, and I was left with the survivors.

REESE: When was the first time you remember hearing of the idea of a course in methodology? Not in the subject matter, but in methodology.

KUBLER: Oh, I don't think I talked about it much as methodology, but the different ways a different task can be done.

REESE: Did you create such a course at Yale [University], or was it the department that created such a course?

KUBLER: Well, I gave the course repeatedly, many years in a row, and in each year I blocked out different parts of the history of the methods that were being used. Different periods, different groups, different clusters of writers about what identifies method--to answer your question.

REESE: Was it something that other of your initial colleagues in the history of art program also showed an interest in or participated with you in teaching?

KUBLER: No. No. Well, yes. I remember sharing a course with the Hollander.

REESE: [Egbert] Haverkamp-Begemann.

KUBLER: Haverkamp-Begemann, yes. He was a very good partner. He caught on immediately and took his share. And it was easy to participate with him.

REESE: But he would have come to Yale in about 1960 or in the late fifties.

KUBLER: Yes.

REESE: But you had been teaching a course from very early.

KUBLER: Yes, for some years before that, yes. It was really always a group of equals. I considered the students as equals, doing the same work as I was. I tried

to make this apparent at every turn.

REESE: I'm commenting on it because it's so often pointed out that America lacked this kind of interest in either theory or method. In fact when The Shape of Time: [Remarks on the History of Things] first came out, it was much praised as one of the very rare American products that works in that way. That's why I was interested in whether you felt that in teaching such a class it was something unique, or whether you felt that it was something that had its analogues in other history of art departments or in other departments in the campus that you were--

KUBLER: Well, I didn't know at the time of anything like it, and I was not aware that it was being imitated, except that in the department, it was regarded as a successful and useful thing to continue. It continued, but never in the same way. There was a constant shifting of ground to cover, and one can go on almost endlessly in this way without excessive effort. It's always a system of discovery with equals also doing the work, the same work on different subjects. And that was the way it went.

REESE: And in that course, you were covering, as you were in your independent graduate seminars, the whole realm of artistic production.

KUBLER: Yes. The reading was of the writings that were

of methodological interest. Methodological interest. Those might be Renaissance treatises or contemporary works.

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KUBLER: The course was never large. Sometimes it was three or four, never more than six or seven, but always different topics were the subject of study.

REESE: Did you feel that it owed in any way to the work and method of [Henri] Focillon or others you had worked with at the Institute [of Fine Arts, New York University]?

KUBLER: A great deal. The concept of the equality of the student with the conductor of the course, the teacher of the course, was Focillon's method. One was never a student with him. One was an equal, which is a difficult thing to do.

REESE: Would he, in his teaching, have focused on kind of the explication de texte, for example, of a work about the history of art, say looking at design or looking at other historical writings that could be analyzed and dissected for the benefit of the students?

KUBLER: As I remember it, his teaching was not of the seminar type. He was not interested in that. He had big blocks of lectures which he gave to huge audiences, and he would have the smaller courses on more restricted topics with smaller audiences of graduate students and undergraduates and visitors from other departments, which

tended to be lecture courses rather than seminars. There were so many who wanted to hear him. He never lectured in English. It was always in French.

REESE: So it would be the Institute where the German seminar, basically a modern instrument--

KUBLER: It would be the Institute where the seminar was the order of the day, at the Institute of Fine Arts. Mostly in the Warburg building and in the hotel, and then finally in the Duke house. That was after my time.

REESE: Well, the other thing I wanted to ask about is your relationship to writing, and particularly to finding the appropriate kind of rhythm and quality of word and vehicle, linguistic vehicle, for the expression of your ideas. And how conscious you are, or how conscious have you been, over your career about trying to find a voice that is your own. Not merely a voice--ideas, but also a kind of sentence structure, a kind of organization of words and sentences and ideas that is yours.

KUBLER: That's very difficult to answer. I have no record of myself performing.

ELIZABETH KUBLER: If I may-- You like to have precise words. You don't like to have a clutter of words. You want always to find the right expression for your meaning, and you have consistently done that. You hone down things. You're always looking, and you make me look for

the right words.

KUBLER: Thank you. That was what you wanted to know. [laughter]

REESE: But perhaps you could say more about-- Because the search for the word addresses the question, I think, that Richard was talking about yesterday, about metaphor in many ways and the kind of concept that opens and that is very useful to you. But I'm also interested in the kind of construction of sentences and the kind of rhythms and how conscious you are about shaping these for a certain effect. In "effect" I mean not merely a formalistic effect, but a communicative effect.

KUBLER: As I began to say, I have no record of my voice in these decades. I don't remember what I said, but I remember that I was always consulting written notes, written notes which I was elaborating and lecturing from. Filling in gaps, but to an outline. To an outline, and the lecture was always governed by an orderly set of ideas. That's what I remember about my early teaching. Preparing these outlines which I could use over and over with the increments each year, and discarding some and adding more to the armature of the course. Whether it was a seminar or a lecture course, the method was the same. I always lectured from outlines and I spoke in seminars from outlines.

REESE: I mean, what I'm actually thinking about is something we discussed, I think, in the last interview, which is the very kind of laconic prose of The Shape of Time, which very much, I think, is a reflection of what Betty was saying, the search for the precise word which will carry that meaning and allow that to stand, and reflection can emerge around it. But in the later prose what I notice are sentences that grow in complexity and richness in their rhythmical structure. I would describe them as sentences which move in a direction, but then constantly break to open new doors, which are hinted at, and then shift back to another point. So they have a kind of open-ended quality to them which are constantly inserting larger questions into them. Almost like some German extended modifying phrases accomplish. But I was curious if you're conscious of these kinds of--

KUBLER: Less so than you, and you're uniquely qualified to say so because of your work on these essays Studies in Ancient American and European Art: [The Collected Essays of George Kubler (1985)]. And I thank you for that work.

REESE: One other way to approach this is your relationship to editors. Do you tend to resist an editor who wants to, kind of, correct your prose, "correct" in quotation marks?

KUBLER: No, on the contrary, I welcome it. I look

forward to it and take much help from it, from a good editor.

REESE: Now, one thing that I wanted to ask that is perhaps so broad that I'm not at all sure that you'll find an easy entrance into it was what kind of vision you have about the state of professional art history today in the early 1990s. I mean, clearly you have come at a profession as a pioneer at the very beginning, and you've watched and participated in the expansion of this from this early core into an industry. I just wonder what kind of reflections you have about this course that it has pursued and what its present and future might be.

KUBLER: Well, I think it's symptomatic that the history of art has fallen behind the history of ideas. The history of ideas is much more complex than the history of art recognizes. The enrichment of the ideational structure of the history of art is very difficult to achieve. My concern with this retardation in the understanding of scientific literature and biological literature is symptomatic. It's only rarely in the practice of the history of art that one has any intimation of awareness of the world of science and what's beyond the humanities. And when it is tried, it is naive and inept. So I'm alarmed about the state of quiescence and acceptance of the past rather than involvement with the

present and the future of the practice of the history of art.

REESE: And what do you think the most fruitful strategy for attempting to incorporate this vast body of new research that lies outside the domain is?

KUBLER: Well, opening up people's eyes to it. If I were teaching again, I think I would be interested in working out ways of sharing my ignorance of biology, or of physical sciences, with the students studying with me in the history of art.

SMITH: What has happened in all the disciplines is an increasing specialization, so that when one talks about biology or one talks about physics, there's actually perhaps two hundred disciplines, which have their own specialized journals. This has led to a rapid augmentation of knowledge. How does someone in the humanities even begin to hope to grasp what's going on except in a superficial manner? What's the point of trying to apply what is at best a very superficial understanding of very complex phenomena that even very few biologists or physicists understand in a totality?

KUBLER: It's not a difficult task to discover what a group of scientists bound together by a common interest are concerned with and what they are doing and what they have done and what the principles are. Those are very

easily extracted from a few readings either of journals or of monographs or of the instruments used in the teaching of genetic biology, for example. One can approach and not master, but be on familiar terms with, the inside of genetic studies without being a geneticist. It's no more difficult than discovering what makes a field interesting in the history of art where one is not familiar. It's no more difficult than that. It is a matter of finding the right readings, the readings that preferably are used in teaching, in teaching beginners. Those texts, and especially recent ones, are the most direct way into the world of experiment and fresh start. Of course it's all past work, but it's the basis on which you can begin to think about it. We don't do much of that in the history of art. We're more concerned to find out more about certain artists and more and more and more and more artists or architects or sculptors or-- More and more of the same instead of enriching a body of ideas with which one works.

REESE: We always forget too easily that the scientists are reading great literary texts, philosophy many times, and going to art exhibits. And as many of their ideas are probably embedded in the experiences from worlds where we feel comfortable.

KUBLER: They're better humanists than we are. A good

scientist is usually very well informed about what we are doing and about what's in the galleries.

REESE: Do you have any thoughts on the texture of so much postmodernist deconstructionist writing today, in terms of its position in this quest that you say we need to do? Is it a helpful or is it some way a distractive enterprise?

KUBLER: Most decidedly helpful, and very necessary to know about the organization of those ideas and their limitations, especially with things like deconstruction which have a motif character and are worth understanding.

REESE: Have you been attracted at all to the large number of texts coming out of cultural studies, largely looking at the kind of decolonization of the world? I mean, have you been attracted at all to those texts?

KUBLER: I'm interested in anything that's new, significantly new, and I wish I had more time.

SMITH: Are you thinking in particular about somebody like Homi Babha?

REESE: Or people in anthropology to whom it's not necessarily the language of form or the method, but the kind of question of focusing on this as a subject which is highly productive. I mean, there is a certain discourse now that I think is dominating that field, but it's just to me astonishing.

KUBLER: Which is this field?

REESE: This whole field of cultural studies, which deals with everything from the kind of border cultures and diaspora cultures and the whole condition of societies in exile, societies in--

KUBLER: So this is really sociology.

REESE: An ethnography, a history, a literary analysis that's just opening. It's one of these other floodgates.

KUBLER: Sociology with rich tools, a rich choice of tools.

SMITH: There is also a visual analysis that often takes place with this.

KUBLER: Yes, and visual analysis. The whole structure of knowledge is evolved, and the responsibility of the members of the university.

REESE: It must be amazing for you, as it is for me, to walk into a university bookstore and to look at a world which, you know, in the thirties and forties you were begging people to even recognize. To see that a generation of sixties and seventies Ph.D.'s are, you know, now literally writing about these things in such a kind of prolific way that you can barely, once again, recapture the object that began the whole thing.

KUBLER: There's never time enough. There's never time enough, but the problem is to use the time well.

SMITH: Relating to Tom's larger question of the future of

art history, I think one of the changes that has taken place over the last twenty years is a deemphasis on art as a visual medium. Marjorie Perloff in her study of the futurists [The Futurist Moment: Avant-Garde, Avant Guerre, and the Language of Rupture] refers to art as really being a mode of invention, a way of manipulating things. So that one worries less about visual analysis than thinking about the way in which people conceptualize and put together objects which may or may not be primarily visual in their nature, but are nonetheless objects. A lot of this I think grows out of the art that's developed in the last twenty years in particular. How do you feel about a deemphasis on the visual aspects of art, or a reshift in the definition?

KUBLER: Well, once one has learned how to perform visual analysis of an art historical type, that's that. That's an acquisition. That's an acquisition. There are plenty of other things to go to, and people in the profession too often remain content with one tool, one tool in the bench, which is visual analysis.

REESE: But do you come to think more that visual analysis is not necessarily at the root of knowledge as much as it is part of some larger, more universal way of knowing? I'm thinking particularly of many people writing about art now from a literary point of view, who would see all

painting as basically a literary, textual construct, as opposed to the art historian, who would argue for the primacy of a visual base that is distinct from text as object. But I ask this because the work on psychology that you were talking about last night seems to, in some way, perhaps collapse those boundaries between, say, text based and visual based. Or does it for you?

KUBLER: Well, there is a need to amplify the modes, the modalities of approach, the modalities of method, to enrich the methodological tool bag. It's most easily done in approaching unfamiliar fields of study, preferably sciences and auxiliary studies that would enrich the practice and understanding of the history of art.

REESE: But largely as tools.

KUBLER: There isn't enough overflow from the sciences into the humanities. The humanities are static in relation to science. The sciences are infinitely more active in the change of the ideational content.

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